Manitoba Constitutional Task Force

February 4, 1991
Thompson, Manitoba

No. 4

Chairman: Professor Wally Fox-Decent

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MANITOBA CONSTITUTIONAL TASK FORCE

Monday, February 4, 1991

TIME — 1:30 p.m

LOCATION — Thompson, Manitoba

CHAIRMAN — Professor Wally Fox-Decent

Members of the Task Force present:

Mr. James Carr (Member for Crescentwood)

Mrs. Shirley Render (Member for St. Vital)

* Substituting for Mr. Oscar Lathlin (Member for The Pas), Mr. George Hickes (Member for Point Douglas)

* Substituting for Hon. Darren Praznik (Member for Lac du Bonnet), Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Member for St. Norbert)

* Substituting for Ms. Jean Friesen (Member for Wolseley), Mr. Steve Ashton (Member for Thompson)

* Substituting for Hon. James McCrae (Member for Brandon West), Hon. James Downey (Member for Arthur-Virden)

Support Staff for the Manitoba Constitutional Task Force:

Professor S. Gallagher, Research Director

Kathleen Mico, Research Officer

Terry Simmonds, Research Officer

Vic Toews, Legal Counsel

Witnesses:

Holly C. Beard, Private Citizen

Molly Robinson, Private Citizen

Angus MacIntyre, Director of Economic Development, City of Thompson

Joseph Gilbert, Private Citizen

Jacqueline Dunning, Canadian Paraplegic Association, Thompson

Bob McCleverty, Private Citizen

Valerie McClurg, Private Citizen

Robert Sumner, Private Citizen

Bob Mayer, Private Citizen

Robert Wavey, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak

Rod Bruinooge, Private Citizen

Moryon Svendson, Private Citizen

Lilly Becker and Hari Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton, Private Citizens

Brian Wilson, Private Citizen

Bruce Guyan, Private Citizen

Written Submissions:

Ken Collin, The Progressive Conservative Association of Thompson

Matters Under Consideration:

Public Presentations—Manitoba Constitutional Task Force

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Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our public hearing, No. 1, in Thompson. There will be a second hearing this evening starting at 7 p.m. in this same room. I would, before I call on our presenter, with pleasure announce the Members of the task force who are present today. The task force has six anchor Members, if I can put it that way, six Members of the Legislature who are the regular Members of the group. However, from time to time, others will substitute for the regular Members, and we have several who are sitting in or substituting for regular Members today.

I am going to begin at the end of the table. On my left, the gentleman at the end of the table is Mr. George Hickes. He is the New Democratic Member of the Legislature for Point Douglas. Next to him is Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, who is the Conservative Member of the Legislature for St. Norbert. On my immediate left is Mr. Jim Carr, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba and the Member of the Legislature for Crescentwood. Moving to my right, the end of the table, a gentleman who needs no introduction to Thompson, your Member of the Legislature for Thompson, Mr. Steve Ashton, who is one of the leading Members of the New Democratic Caucus, a House Leader, in fact, for the New Democrats. Next to him, the Honourable Jim Downey. Mr. Downey is the Conservative Member of the Legislature for Arthur-Virden, and he is Minister of Northern and Native Affairs for the Government of Manitoba. On my immediate right is Mrs. Shirley Render, the

Conservative Member of the Legislature for St. Vital. My name is Wally Fox-Decent.

* (1340)

So, ladies and gentlemen, I would call our first presenter, Ms. Holly Beard. We normally have time rules, Ms. Beard, but we would be delighted for you to go on and on as long as you please. The afternoon is yours, except for the 35 minutes of questioning that is assigned to each of the Members of the task force. I hope you have nothing planned before 6 p.m. this evening.

Ms. Holly C. Beard (Private Citizen): I will take note of that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

I passed out copies of my presentation, and I am not passing myself off as being an expert in this area. These are basically my thoughts and my feelings. I appeared before the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force to speak in favour of the passage of the Meech Lake Accord. Unfortunately, the accord did not pass, and we now find ourselves back at the drawing board.

First, I would like to make a few observations. I believe that Quebec is a very important component of Canada. We are a relatively young country, and a large part of our early history took place in Quebec. If Quebec leaves Canada, we will lose many of the sites of our early history. History and a common-shared past are important to any country but are particularly important to a country like ours, which is made up of many diverse groups struggling to find and maintain a common identity. A sense of history and shared experiences are important to develop a common purpose and goal, the cement that holds the bricks together, and I believe that we should be using our best resources to keep Canada together. Quebec's different culture and language make Canada an infinitely more interesting and exciting place than it would otherwise be.

I believe that one of our country's more endearing although divisive features is the diversity of our regions, including Quebec. While Quebec has been the most vocal region as regards its concerns with the current constitutional arrangement and has been the most focused about the specific changes that it wants to implement, it is not the only region expressing dissatisfaction. Westerners have long felt badly treated by the people in Ontario, while the Maritimes are constantly having difficulties as the poor cousins of Confederation.

Aboriginal peoples are demanding that their claims to sovereignty and a recognition of their special place in Canada be recognized and resolved. To some extent, I believe that Quebec, as the most pro-active cultural group within Canada, is bearing the brunt of the blame for the current constitutional difficulties, while, in fact, the whole relationship within Canada is less than harmonious.

I recently attended a conference on Canadian unity at McGill University to try and better understand the current constitutional crisis within Canada. I learned many things at the conference, two of the most revealing being the following. This took place in the fall. Quebec was quickly moving forward on the road to constitutional reform, while the West, certainly the North, seemed to be paying little attention. I had the feeling we were like the Roman Emperor Nero fiddling while Rome burns.

My second and more disturbing discovery had to do with the concept of what is called the rest of Canada. I think that most people outside of Quebec who feel we should refuse to negotiate with Quebec, have a view that we should let Quebec go and that the rest of Canada should continue on as before. I came to the realization this is probably not an option, and, in fact, if Quebec chooses to separate, that will probably force major changes in the relationship among the other provinces. For example, how can the Maritime provinces remain as a part of Canada if they are not geographically connected? Will Ontario negotiate a new relationship with Quebec instead of remaining as a part of the rest of Canada? Will British Columbia, in many ways already geographically and emotionally separated from the rest of Canada, choose to also separate politically?

* (1345)

I guess I have come to the conclusion that whether or not Quebec ultimately separates, there are going to be major changes in the Canadian Constitution. I therefore believe that our efforts should be focused on supporting changes which include Quebec as a part of Canada rather than excluding it.

I understand that this task force has been asked to address six major areas, and I will try to respond to some of those. The first area is the division of powers between the federal and provincial Governments. This will be the most important issue to be resolved, particularly in light of the sweeping changes proposed in the recent report of the Quebec Liberal Party.

The world is changing very quickly, and people are demanding they be included as participants in the decision-making process as regards most

Government decisions. Given the size and diversity of Canada, I believe this can only be accomplished, while at the same time allowing Governments to respond to issues in an effective and timely fashion, if more authority devolves to the regions. In most instances it will be unwieldy to try and design programs which are suitable to all regions by a central Government. I have come to the conclusion, therefore, that the devolution of power to the regions, and in fact back to the voters, is inevitable.

The second issue was Senate reform. I do not favour a Senate that has the right to override the decisions of the House of Commons. I believe one body must be given the ultimate authority to make decisions on a matter at issue and must be required to assume responsibility for those decisions, and I think that should be the House of Commons, whether in its current or some altered form. This does not necessarily mean the Senate should be abolished. However, the importance of having a second body will be determined in some part by the decisions made on the division of powers between the federal and provincial Governments.

If many of the powers now held by the federal Government are transferred to the provinces, then the need for a Triple-E Senate will decrease significantly along with the need for any form of Senate. If the federal Government retains significant powers, then some form of Senate should be retained.

If the Senate was devoid of Party alignment, it could more effectively review and critique the work of all Governments, not just of Governments controlled by an opposing Party. I do feel, however, that the Senate could provide an effective vehicle for examining legislation proposed by the House of Commons, but I feel that their ultimate authority should be to delay and not to veto legislation passed by the House of Commons.

The third issue was—it should not be constitutional parties, I am not sure what it should be -(interjection)- priorities, thank you. The first thing that I would like to discuss is the realignment of the provinces. I would like to see some consideration given to a review of the current division of Canada into provinces and particularly in consideration of whether we should have fewer but larger provinces, or have the western provinces and the Maritime provinces and the North, I would have to add to that, formed into some type of formalized regional structure. This would help, I guess, to outweigh or to balance the current weight of Quebec and Ontario within Canada.

The second is the issue of the division of powers. I would like to see our province consider carefully how Manitoba will fare under various federal-provincial power-sharing scenarios and prepare our own wish list. As I previously indicated, I believe that people are demanding more input into the decision-making process, and to maintain a streamlined and effective process, this can only happen if more power is devolved to the provinces. There is no doubt that the federal Government will have to maintain a role in providing equalization payments to help poor provinces and/or regions maintain a standard of living equal to that of the richer provinces, and that issue will also have to be more closely examined.

The third comment that I have is I would like to see our province, Manitoba, study the manner in which the current political system impedes Manitoba's growth and development and determine what changes would be necessary to remove those impediments.

Another issue to be addressed is the amending formula. Again, like the issue of Senate reform, the question of the amending formula may become a non-issue depending on the final division of powers between the federal and provincial Governments.

If Quebec's bottom line is that it must have a veto power over constitutional amendments or it will leave Canada, then I think the veto is significantly preferable to allowing Canada to separate. I would favour an amending formula based on a majority for the rest of the provinces, a majority decision for the rest of the provinces, and some type of special protection for Quebec rather than giving a veto to each province.

* (1350)

I am not in a position to respond on the constitutional reform proposals put forward in other jurisdictions as I am not sufficiently familiar with them. I am also not going to respond to the task force recommendations related to the Charter of Rights, aboriginal rights, women's rights and the recognition of Canada's multicultural heritage, other than to say that I believe that the concerns of aboriginal people should be addressed in a timely fashion and that I would like to see a strong emphasis placed on promoting a Canadian identity rather than encouraging the emphasis on multicultural heritage. While I am not suggesting that people must abandon their heritage, I do feel that more attention should be placed on developing a Canadian identity.

I believe that we are looking at major and significant constitutional changes within Canada and not a few minor adjustments to calm the waters. I would therefore encourage the Government of Manitoba to give this issue the very highest priority and to take a very pro-active stance, to consider the very widest range of changes to the current constitutional make-up of Canada. I believe strongly that a weak-kneed approach or refusal to consider the issues that may be considered controversial will limit our options and our ability to contribute to the best solution for Canada.

The fullest consideration should be given to matters such as provincial boundaries, sharing of powers and the financial and economic structure of Canada, to name a few. I think we should look at other political structures around the world to see whether some other type of political alliance would better suit the needs of Canada and Manitoba. I believe that we are at a crossroads where important decisions will be made—with us, if we participate, or for us, if we do not. I only hope that we Manitobans participate in the process, that we set aside the urge to be harsh and mean spirited, and instead we seize this opportunity to build a better Canada for all Canadians.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Beard. The first questioner? Mrs. Render.

Mrs. Shirley Render (Member for St. Vital): A lot of our presenters in the past have talked about a strong federal Government. I notice you say that if the federal Government retains significant powers, then some form of Senate should be retained. Can you elaborate? I mean, if that is the route that it appears we are going, can you elaborate on what form the Senate should be—appointed, elected, non-partisan?

Ms. Beard: I have given the options some consideration. I guess I have not made up my own mind on that. I think the issue of a non-partisan Senate would certainly give it the ability to respond to issues regardless of who was in the Government, and I think that is something that should be considered. I have some problems with both forms of Senate, and I guess I have not made up my mind on that yet, as I say, because I think both have problems.

The appointed Senate obviously has the problems the current Senate has, that it does not have a lot of credibility, and people do not accept the decisions generally that are made by the Senate.

The elected Senate, if it is a limited-term election, has its own problems as well. I guess the biggest problem that I see is—I believe really strongly that, as I indicated, someone has to be able to make a final decision, and they have to be able to do that in a pro-active manner. I think they have to be able to assume responsibility.

My concern, I guess, with the situation, if you have an elected Senate and an elected House of Commons, is that the House of Commons can propose legislation. If the Senate turns it down, then you do not have anyone being responsible because the House of Commons says, hey, we made a proposal, these other guys did not pass it. The other guys say, well, we did not like it and it is not our responsibility to propose legislation, and you do not have responsibility falling with anyone. I think that would be a shortcoming if you had a situation where a Senate could overrule any legislation. I certainly would not favour that kind of a situation.

I think it would be really unworkable, and I think what you would have happening is, if there were areas where the provinces or the federal Government could act, the federal Government could become quite ineffective because they would not be able to make decisions. I think the provinces, by default, would end up assuming responsibility in a lot of areas.

It may be that even if those were areas of federal responsibility, the provinces would start assuming responsibility through the back door as the federal Government has now through financing of areas that are provincial concern like health care and education. If the federal Government cannot make decisions, then eventually the provinces will in some ways step in themselves and make those decisions anyway. I think if you make the process too unwieldy, then it will not work and some other informal process will just take its place anyway.

That does not answer the question about whether I think it should be elected or appointed, but I just do not think that it should be a Triple-E sort of equal Senate, equal to the House of Commons Senate, in terms of legislation.

Mr. George Hickes (Member for Point Douglas): I would just like to ask you if you could clarify a little further about the statement about—I believe that concerns of aboriginal people should be addressed in a timely fashion. Do you see a time frame built into that? Also, what process would you like to see taken in order to address that?

* (1355)

Ms. Beard: I guess a concern I have for the frustration that everyone feels is I think the difficulty that the aboriginal people have in deciding what they want, because I am sure if the aboriginal people could come together and say, here is how we will be satisfied with you solving our problems, any Government would say fine, let us go for it, you know, to resolve the problem.

A problem with the time frame, I think, is really from the time frame of the aboriginal people, in getting them to decide what it is that they really want as a group, or whether they want to decide that, hey, there is no one solution for all of us so let us each resolve our problems on an individual basis. I think that the longer the matter continues on, the more difficult it is going to be to resolve, but I cannot say whether that is six months, two years or 10 years.

Mr. Hickes: Could I just see if I am hearing you correctly? What you are interpreting is that there are possibly different solutions for different aboriginal groups in different provinces or different parts of the territories or of the province.

Ms. Beard: That is my feeling. I am not aware of all the aboriginal peoples in Canada having come together and said, here is the solution to all of our problems. If you will do this, then we will all be forever happy or we will all be happy for the next 25 years.

Certainly, from what I have seen of even the different aboriginal peoples, they are all at such different levels of development and integration and abilities in terms of their ability to operate in today's world that I think it is going to be difficult to come up with one solution that is going to solve everybody's problems. You know, I see that as a major problem in terms of anyone coming up with a solution.

Mr. Hickes: Further to that, could you see different health systems, education systems and stuff with different aboriginal groups in different parts of the province? Is that what you are saying? I am just trying to get a better understanding.

Ms. Beard: Yes. I do not know about in different parts of the province. I think the aboriginal people are going to have to decide how they want that resolved.

I do not know that all aboriginal peoples necessarily have to have the same health care system, each within their own group, that one aboriginal group has to have the same health care system or perhaps even the same political structure as the next group does. I think they should be able to resolve that themselves in terms of what would best suit their history, their cultural needs and what they see as being their futures.

One group may want less sovereignty and more integration within Canada on perhaps a municipal kind of structure and be satisfied with that. Maybe other groups that do not find that satisfactory want more sovereignty and less integration. I think, at least initially, they are going to have to decide what it is they want before Canada can respond to it.

Mr. Hickes: What I am hearing is that the sooner they start the process the better it is for aboriginal people. Is that what you are saying?

Ms. Beard: Certainly that is what I am saying. That is right.

I think the sooner they start the process of deciding what they want—and I do not know how the federal Government, how any Government, how any Canadian can really deal with that.

Part of the problem I have seen, that I think the Native people have, has been in not being able to manage their own affairs and having things done for them. To suggest that the federal Government has not solved the problem is really just repeating the problems of the past, because the federal Government cannot solve their problem. They have to solve their problem. They are certainly going to need, I guess, the ultimate concurrence or legislation from the federal Government, but I think the response has to come from them, because anything the federal Government does, if it is not their response, they are not going to claim ownership of it, and it is not going to be something that they value or that is theirs.

I think the responsibility ultimately rests with them. I mean, in many ways—well, what happened this summer at Oka and subsequent has been very tragic. I think it has also been hopeful in that it has really been good to see the Native people saying, we are going to take charge, we are going to make some decisions and assume some responsibility, because I think that is what has to happen.

* (1400)

Mr. James Carr (Member for Crescentwood): I am interested in your concept of a country with large regions, not so many smaller provinces but, I gather, four regions. Would you give each of those regions equal power and authority? Would you treat Quebec as a region differently, and just how do you see that taking shape?

I notice in your brief that you think that it is in the country's interest to devolve power from the central Government to the regions. Are you prepared to make a special case of Quebec, that it has needs that are different from the other regions and therefore negotiate separate agreements between these newly created regions and the federal Government, or would you treat them all the same?

Ms. Beard: I guess I think that we do not have a choice in terms of how we are going to treat Quebec because in the end, I believe, if Quebec is not satisfied with the relationship, then they are going to leave. They are going to treat themselves differently anyway.

I guess I think that Canada would be better if Quebec participates to the extent that Quebec feels comfortable participating. I would be prepared to negotiate that as I guess I would with any other region. I think at this point the existing structure that we have is really history, and it is just a question of how long it is going to take to get rid of it.

I think that we are going to have to have some association with Quebec and I mean, if Quebec leaves, then our association may be the same kind of association that we have with the United States or other countries, but it is going to be an association. I guess that is the ultimate in terms of them being treated differently, is we will have a free trade agreement with them like we have with the States.

I guess I hope that does not happen, and I think it is important enough that they be retained as part of Canada, that if their bottom line becomes special status and nothing else, then I think I would prefer that to saying no, you leave, and you set up your own country and Canadians wanting to go to Quebec will have passports from now on. I guess if that becomes important to the other regions or the other provinces that they also have a veto, then I suppose that will happen as well.

I guess I just see some of these things as being inevitable, and I think that people who are arguing against them just are not being realistic. I hope that there is a Canada left at the end of it all. I think that we should do whatever we can to make sure that happens, but I think it is going to be significantly different than we have now.

Mr. Carr: Assuming that it is not so significantly different though, that we have four regions rather than 10 or nine provinces, why would it be in Manitoba's interests to give more powers to the province and less to the federal Government?

Ms. Beard: I think that individual Canadians are demanding more input into the process in terms of wanting to participate prior to decisions being made rather than being told by the Government, here is our decision and, you know, you can vote us in or out at the next election.

I think for the whole of Canada that process becomes unwieldy if the federal Government is legislating in a lot of areas, so I think that it is going to have to happen. I think people are insisting that it happen. I do not think people are going to let it not happen.

Mr. Carr: I guess my question is why would it be good for Manitoba if it did happen? What do we have to benefit and what areas—

Ms. Beard: Because I think then decisions can be made. I mean, you need a unit that is small enough so that effective decisions can be made and people can participate. That will not happen. If the federal Government has the same powers or a lot of powers in various areas, that will not happen on an effective basis. I mean, it takes so long to get things done, for the federal Government to get things done.

Take a look at the problems with the environmental processes, for instance. It just does not come together. You know, we are going to have the same problems with telecommunications and the CRTC running all over Canada and holding hearings and I think not being able to get some effective decisions made.

I think the more areas that can reasonably be given back to the provinces to legislate in, I think the better legislation we are going to get or at least more effective, and things will happen more quickly. I mean, when you need a decision made and it takes years to get it done by the federal Government, you really do not have effective decision making then. Then things happen with no decisions being made.

* (1405)

The abortion law, it has been years and they are just not getting decisions made. Now we are back to having no abortion law. Some people think that is good and bad, but you can just see, I think, how unwieldy the process is, and ineffective. So I think that a process that results in effective decision making is really the process that we want. I do not see a proposal of having a lot of decisions made by the

federal Government as being an effective system, because I just do not think decisions get made.

Mr. Carr: Can you be a little specific for us and tell us just what areas you think would be better administered by either one of your four regions or one of the 10 provinces, Manitoba in particular?

Ms. Beard: Education—I mean, I think that education should be a provincial or regional decision, not a federal Government decision.

Mr. Carr: It is now.

Ms. Beard: I am just trying to run through the list of powers, I guess, that there are. I think that health care is the kind of a system that should be run by regions. I mean, I think regions should decide what level of health care they want. I do not have a problem, I guess, with there being a basic level of health care provided across the system, but I think that there are lots of issues in terms of health care that regions should be able to decide—what their people want to pay for them and what kind of a system they want to have.

You know, do you want to have a user-pay system or not have a user-pay system? Do you want to have ambulances covered by the health care system, or do you want people to pay for ambulances, that kind of thing? Pharmacare, is that going to be a provincial decision? Legal Aid, is it going to be a provincial decision or a federal decision? I mean, now the federal Government is taking over so many areas by way of the funding process that traditionally have been federal areas, that if the current system continues, the federal Government is likely to be running the show.

Mr. Hickes: I have two brief questions. One is, the current political system impedes Manitoba's growth. Could you clear that up for me a bit?

Ms. Beard: That is just what I would like to see the provincial Government doing, is taking a more pro-active stance. I guess the first thing to do is to take a look at how the current system affects Manitoba's growth, affects Manitobans' abilities to govern themselves the way they want their province governed. I am saying that I think that is sort of the first step that I would like to see the provincial Government taking, sort of an assessment or review of our current system and how we do not like it, why we do not like it. So I guess in part is what this is, but I think that it is really more of an analysis of where we are now.

Mr. Hickes: The other question I have is your comment with our health care system. Do you believe in a uniform health care system across Canada, or are you looking at the possibility of a two-tier system where you would have, just like what you were talking about, some of the basic issues of ambulances, or it could be prescription drugs. If you have the resources to purchase them, you do, and if you do not, then what do you do?

Ms. Beard: That is basically what is happening now in terms of a basic system being provider guaranteed for all Canadians and, I guess, a level of service that some people have provided for them and some people do not, for whatever reasons. Yes, I think people have to, to some extent, assume responsibility for the standard of living that they have and be able to make decisions. Do we want the Government to provide this? Do we want to provide this for ourselves?

So, yes, I think that the decisions have to be made on what the basic level of service is that we think should be provided to everyone and, above that, decide: Do we want our money to be taken away from us for taxes to provide better, or do we think people should provide that themselves? The abortion clinics are a classic example. There may be some regions that feel really strongly that abortion clinics should not be provided through the health care system. I think people should have the right to make those decisions.

Hon. James Downey (Member for Arthur-Virden): I just have a brief question. Holly, to bring us back to this regional concept which you are talking about, do you believe in the current system that we have which, I think, has created some of the problems, not only in Canada as it relates to the House of Commons being overly representative or heavily representative from Quebec and Ontario, where we have the larger population versus some of the outlying regions with lesser populations, as it is today in, say, in northern Manitoba relating to the highly populated areas of Winnipeg and southern Manitoba? Are you a believer in the representation in the House of Commons and/or in the Legislative Assemblies "rep by pop," or do you believe we should work on another formula that would give us more regional representation in those Houses?

* (1410)

Ms. Beard: I guess my preference would be to see something worked out between a combination of the two, where there is some protection for regions. That

is why, if the Maritimes formed a region and the West formed a region, then you would have a block somewhat more equivalent to Ontario or Quebec, keeping in mind as well the "rep by pop" concept.

I do not have a formula in my mind to say, here is how I think that the thing should be set up, but I think that the reality is that Manitoba in the whole of Canada is not likely ever to be a significant, in terms of proportion of population, entity. So I would like to see it combined with the rest of the West so that Ontario or Quebec would not say, look, why are we always paying for you guys? We can say, hey, you know, we have a significant base here, and we have the right to more significant input into the decisions and possibly having some guarantee for protection, regions having a certain percentage of the seats in the House of Commons.

Mrs. Render: I would just like to say that your presentation was really well put together and easy to follow. I would just like to pick up on something that you have said on top of page 7, because a couple of other presenters have also mentioned this—promoting a Canadian identity. Then later on in the paragraph you say, more attention should be placed on developing a Canadian identity.

In our talk back and forth last week, somebody suggested that perhaps there should be a preamble of 25 words or more or less at the beginning of the Constitution saying what it means to be a Canadian. What do you mean when you say there should be more emphasis placed on developing a Canadian identity? What process do you see happening so that occurs, or do you simply see something fairly simple, like 25 words or less, what it means to be a Canadian?

Ms. Beard: I do not think that the words in the Constitution are going to make any difference one way or the other. I think that it has to be something that both the federal Government and the provinces assume more responsibility for on a more practical basis in making a decision that this is what we are going to do and doing it. It is really hard to say things about multiculturalism without people not pointing fingers and saying, hey, you know, you are a racist or whatever.

I think that the multiculturalism has a valid place to play in Canada. I mean, my grandparents came from the Ukraine, and it is something that is really important to me, and it is something that is interesting to me, but I do not think it should be more important than being Canadian. It seems in some instances that, I guess because the multicultural aspects are easier to focus on in a Canadian identity, it is becoming more important. I would like to see all Governments spending more time promoting, on a daily basis, singing of the national anthem and things like that, which I think are important to help people feel a sense of allegiance to the country. I think that more effort should be placed on promoting Canadian history, Canadian historical sites, that kind of thing that you just never see in Canada. Just in terms of advertising and programs, whether it is TV programs or focusing vacations on viewing Canadian historical sites, just so that it becomes more a part of our everyday existence rather than not.

I am certainly not promoting Americanism as necessarily a way of life, but I think that certainly in terms of promoting an American identity, there is no comparison between obviously what they have done in the States and here, and I think we need to do more of that, to develop more of a sense of pride in our country. I mean, our country has lots of wonderful things and you just never hear about them.

I think it is more of a practical approach that the Government should take. It is really people saying we want you to do this, Government, rather that the words in the Constitution because if it is not there, if the demand is not there, then I guess the words are not going to make any difference. It just will not happen.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Member for Thompson): Yes, I read with interest your comments in discussing the regional concerns within Confederation and your references to obviously the North being one of those regions. Too often when we hear a discussion of Canada's future in terms of regions, it tends to be the Maritimes, the West, Quebec and Ontario with very little reference to the North.

I wonder if you have any ideas on how the very specific concerns of Northerners—by the North I mean not just the Territories, but obviously those of us who live in areas such as this which is north, finally recognized that way for the Northern Tax Allowance, I guess, but this is the North in mentality, certainly geography. I am wondering if you have any suggestions to the committee on how some of the regional grievances of northern areas can be dealt with in a constitutional framework.

Ms. Beard: We might consider ourselves north. I do not know whether the people in the Territories would consider us very north.

I would think that there should be some kind of a structure in place, a formal structure for the regions, whether it is the Maritimes, the West or the North. I do not know whether you would ever get provinces to say, yes, we will give up our provincial status. I do not know whether that is possible. Maybe ideally the best thing would be for you to have a northern province, a western province and a Maritime province. I do not know whether people are prepared to give that up, and I guess my suspicion is that it would be really difficult or impossible to do.

While it would put another level of bureaucracy in, it may be that regions would have the right to make decisions in certain areas as opposed to provinces and that you would have a regional level of authority in things like transportation perhaps, so that decisions would not be made on a provincial basis, but they would be made on a regional basis.

Then you would have either an elected body or a group made up of the provincial legislatures who would then have the right to make decisions in those areas, so that some of your decision-making process may devolve to a region as opposed to a province, and areas that were more important on a regional basis could then be dealt with by the regions rather than by the provinces.

I think that for that to work you are going to have to have some kind of a structure, a formal structure in place because I do not think the current informal structure is working, you know, like the western provinces do not seem to be getting it together in terms of decision-making processes, and I think they would probably have the same problem with the Maritimes because the provincial interests sort of supersede, and it is hard to give up that little territorialism. I guess I would like to see some powers, and I do not know specifically which ones. I guess transportation would be an example, perhaps communications where decisions would be make on a regional basis as oppposed to a national or a provincial basis.

Mr. Ashton: So, specifically in terms of the North, there might be decisions made that would cross the current provincial boundaries. The reason I mention that is because I know in the case of, for example, northwest Ontario, a lot of people there feel a greater affinity with Manitoba and have a lot more similarities with certainly northern Manitoba than they feel affinity with Toronto in terms of concerns.

Very few people realize, I did not realize until recently that there once was a very major constitutional dispute involving whether that was going to be part of Manitoba or Ontario, and of course I do not think it comes as any surprise that Ontario won and historically that area still had a strong connection. You are suggesting that there might be some way of keeping existing political frameworks, jurisdictional frameworks but getting greater continuity across those boundaries in terms of specific areas such as transportation in terms of northern concerns.

Ms. Beard: I think that would be an option.

* (1420)

Mr. Chairman: You have been very good. We have indulged ourselves because we have had lots of time. Are you willing to answer a couple of more questions? We still have a bit more time, Ms. Beard.

Let me ask you whether your concept of regionalism, in your mind, means the creation of yet another level of government. Would we then have municipal government, provincial government, regional government, and a federal or national government of some form, or do you see the provinces disappearing?

Ms. Beard: As I said, I am not sure whether you could have the provinces disappear. I just do not know whether that would happen, whether the people would be prepared to give up that territorialism. I mean, I can see a major fight over where are we going to put the capital of western Canada, you know.

I am not sure whether that would happen. I guess in that case then, yes, you would have another level of government or level of decision making. I guess it would not be another level inasmuch as you would not be repeating decisions, you would not have decisions made at a provincial and a regional level. It would be one or the other, but if decisions were being made on a regional basis, then they would not be made at a provincial level.

Mr. Chairman: My second question is, I sense in reading your paper that you are prepared to go a very long way to try to accommodate Quebec and keep Quebec as part of Canada. Of course, that goes along with the suggestion that this would be a very different Canada.

I guess I am interested in asking what you see as the minimal powers that would be retained by a national Government. We are now talking about strong regions possibly. We are talking about the

possible retention of provinces and you clearly favour a decentralization. That is very clear from your paper, and you think that it is probably overdue, that we have been hanging on to historical models which are no longer applicable.

Does that mean that you would be comfortable with the minimal powers which emerged from the Allaire paper last week? That would be defence, tariffs, money, equalization, management of the national debt, and then there would be certain shared powers, of course, but you really would be stripping the federal authority down to powers that you could count on the fingers of one hand, if the Allaire model were in fact to be adopted. Are you prepared to go that far in order to accommodate regionalism, whether it be Quebec or whether it be some other region?

Ms. Beard: I guess personally I am fairly flexible. I mean, I supported the Meech Lake proposals. I personally, I guess, am inclined to support whatever will work in the end result. I do not feel strongly in favour of one system or the other system. I could live with either system. You mentioned the federal Government retaining powers over money. If that is the only power they had, they have been able to usurp all kinds of other power because they have had the power over the money. So maybe that is the only authority that they need and they can still end up running everything in the end.

If you take a look at what the actual division of powers is supposed to be under the Constitution, in today's world, the federal Government does not have a lot of power over many things that affect our daily lives. They have taken that power over because of the fact that they have had control of the money. So they really come in the back door doing things that they are not supposed to be doing, or that constitutionally they should not be doing. I did not pull out my Constitution Act and read through the list of the powers that are there for each Government.

In reviewing it and thinking about things that were not mentioned or that I did not hear mentioned—like criminal law, that kind of thing—I do not know where that fell within the Allaire report. I would think that would be important to remain federal, because I think that is obviously the bottom line behaviour beyond which we, as Canadians, do not accept people dropping underneath, the same as a minimum health care system.

In terms of telecommunication policy, for instance, I am not particularly sold on the fact that the federal Government has to be in control of telecommunication policy for Canada. I know why they are, but I do not believe that the whole system would fall apart if they were not. There were not many things in there, having looked at it fairly superficially, because I have not sat down and studied it, obviously, the way a number of other people would. I did not see things in there that would make me pick up my baseball and go home.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I guess one wonders if you do not get to a point where there is not any baseball game to play though, because so much power has devolved to the regions and the provinces that really, de facto, you no longer have a state which you call Canada.

Ms. Beard: I guess so, I think that is where we are getting to. I think that—I do not know that people accept it, but I guess I have become convinced that we are getting to that point where some decisions are going to be made. I think that if Quebec leaves, I think that is going to be the catalyst, it is going to bring all that other stuff to the surface. I do not know where Ontario sits in all of this. I understand that Ontario is having ongoing discussions with Quebec, and I am not convinced that Quebec and Ontario may not come up with some kind of a deal and say to the rest of us, here is the deal, you are in or you are out. Then we will have to decide whether we want to be with them or not with them. I do not know that will happen, but I think that is a possibility. So I think that all things are on the table, and I think we have to take a look at them all. It may be that we have a really severely decentralized Government, but that may not necessarily be bad.

Getting back to the issue of people wanting to have more control over their lives, you cannot sort of have a homogeneous country and also give people control. That certainly seems to be the message that people are giving now, you know, we want to participate and we want some control.

Mr. Chairman: Just a footnote, if I may, on the Ontario issue. Certainly, the Ontario select committee on what is described as Ontario in Confederation has begun its work. They are conducting public hearings right through the month of February like we are, only on a much longer scale than we are, because of the size of the province.

But Premier Rae has made it very clear that in his opinion, Canada is not negotiable in the sense of the existence of a country. I think he has made a very

strong commitment to the continuation of the Canadian state and Ontario being obviously a very important player in that process. So there does not seem to be any side deals, in any sense, cooking here between Ontario and Quebec. In fact, I think Rae has, in a very refreshing way, staked his colours to the mast of working everything possible to maintain one Canadian state with its present participants.

Ms. Beard: That is certainly what I would like to have as well, but I think just like in a family, if one member of a family has a problem, then you all have a problem. If Quebec is not happy, then we all have a problem. In some of the presentations and comments that I have seen in the reports, for instance, from Brandon, I do not see a flexibility to be prepared to say, hey, if you have a problem, we all have a problem, and let us deal with it. I think that has to be there; otherwise, Quebec is going to be gone, and we are not going to have Canada the way we have it today anyway. I really have a hard time seeing the rest of Canada without Quebec, if there is a rest of Canada.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions? Thank you very much, Ms. Beard. You have been very helpful and very patient.

Ms. Beard: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks again. The next presenter is Ms. Molly Robinson.

Ms. Molly Robinson (Private Citizen): Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon, Ms. Robinson.

Ms. Robinson: Some of you at the table know me, but some of you do not.

Mr. Chairman: We have your written submission, thank you.

Ms. Robinson: I came in a little late on Ms. Beard's. Now I do not know whether you want me to read this or go through it?

Mr. Chairman: You can do exactly as you please.

Ms. Robinson: I would prefer to do that.

Mr. Chairman: That is great. That is what most people do who bring a written presentation. There is a nominal time limit of 20 minutes, but we are very flexible this afternoon.

Ms. Robinson: I am Irish, so it may be longer.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be here this afternoon.

I come before you as a private citizen, but a few at the table know of me in the North. I have been in political life. I have been the Executive Director of the YWCA and very interested in the concerns of women, and I have been such in that job for 18 years. I have seen a number of Native women in the North. We house about 21,000 people a year. If you hear a few things in here, or would like to ask me questions on dealing with women in the North, certainly I could answer those when I finish this presentation.

I have been in Manitoba since 1953 and this has become the province of my choice. I was born in Nova Scotia and lived in New Brunswick for awhile, so I am stuck between the problems of mid-Canada. My maternal forefathers settled on the banks of the Mira River in Cape Breton, and my fraternal forefathers in the St. John's area of Newfoundland. Both sides of my family can be traced to the 18th Century.

I lived on the East Coast during the Great Depression, a time of great disparity for Canadians coast to coast. My schoolmates were in mended clothes and with empty stomachs often, and we shared what little we could when we brought things for recess. I challenge everybody at this table, if they remember how to break an apple in half and share that, with your hands, but that is what we used to do.

We never noticed in those days if our friends were Polish, or Irish, or Chinese, or black. I can remember daily in the school we would always start our day with the Maple Leaf Forever. Now, that may be not the song to sing in these days but that was the one we sang when I was a child; but first and foremost we were Canadians.

* (1430)

I lived on the East Coast during World War II and remember the ships in the harbour gathering together to convoy to Great Britain. I remember how we prayed for our men and how we saved our pennies to buy war stamps for the great war effort. I remember victory gardens to extend the rationed food for our tables.

What does this have to do with the Constitution, I am sure you are all thinking. That is me. I am Canadian and this is what I have lived through. While I truly believe one's heritage is to be cherished, I also truly believe that one's country must come first. Too much has been made of being French, of English, or Irish, or aboriginal. Too much of one's heritage has been lumped together for Governments to showcase. Not enough of Canadian life has been focused in our

media, in our literature or in our history text. Canadians do not know Canada.

Most of us cannot afford to travel from coast to coast or even from north to south of this province of ours to learn firsthand of our history, the many cultures that make us so very special. Is it any wonder that we are so parochial in our thinking? Is it any wonder that we fear each other because we speak differently, look differently?

A few nights ago I watched on TV the program On the Road Again—and I do not know whether any of you watched that one—which was highlighting the polar bears in Churchill in our North. On the same program, they showed a lacrosse manufacturer from Oka. It showed how they produce the sticks for lacrosse. They told the history of this century-old sport. The program from Churchill showed the Inuit and Cree children attending school with children of other ethnic backgrounds. The story from Oka was a success story of a small business of a Mohawk family. Both segments of this show educated me to the ways of life in our own Churchill and another side of Oka that was never highlighted this summer during the troubled times in Quebec.

We watched with pride our Manitoba Premier stand up for justice along with Clyde Wells of Newfoundland when the elimination of our aboriginal people's rights and the rights of women were not addressed at Meech Lake. Sixty years ago the white woman got the vote, and 35 years ago the aboriginal woman got the vote. Today women of Canada are among troops in the Middle East.

Today we hear that Quebec wants a new Canada. We hear that aboriginal peoples want self-government. Perhaps it is time to reap what has been lasting and fair. Perhaps it is time to look at new ways of work for our country. I want Canada to stay together. I want my grandchildren to feel welcome and comfortable and, above all, to be proud to be a Canadian.

Our provincial government in unison with the federal Government instituted many educational programs for the disadvantaged, particularly the disadvantaged of the North. The self-esteem and success of these programs is immeasurable. I urge the province not to cut back the funding on BUNTEP, New Careers, Northern School of Social Work and like programs now being offered in the North. How can we ever expect the children of the North to catch up to the 20th Century when they are still parted from the roots of their family to attend school or if they attend school in their home community with no aboriginal people to teach them to understand their culture and language?

Our province and our country must address the injustices to the aboriginal and Metis peoples. No side can work alone. There must be genuine dialogue and caring. I lived in Halifax in the '30s, '40s and early '50s and I saw first-hand the poverty of the blacks who lived in that city. Blacks were not welcome in most neighbourhoods in Halifax when I grew up. Last summer, I was home in Halifax to visit my sister. We went out to one of the newer hotels for a brunch, and 50 percent of the people in that big restaurant were whites and blacks, 50 percent mixed. I remember thinking last summer that life has come a long way in Halifax because that could not have happened 30 years ago. Things can change if people want to make the change.

I love the province of my choice. Manitoba has been very good to me. The City of Thompson has been more than good to me, has educated my children, in this province and in this city, and we have made our home here for the last 28 years. I am so grateful I have been born a Canadian, but there are times when I am not proud to be a Canadian—when I hear and witness the prejudice of this land, when I hear the despair of a young woman who has turned to alcohol to forget the poverty of her life or when I witness a youth of eight years old high on substance abuse.

I would like to make the following suggestions to the task force, and these are not going to be constitutional as my friend—it sounds like the Holly and Molly Show here, but my friend, Holly Beard, she is more constitutional. I guess I am a more—work in the social field of people's feelings, but the suggestions I have are some of the problems I have heard with the people in the North.

It is paramount to open and continue dialogue with the aboriginal leaders of this province, to heal wounds left to fester for so many years. It is paramount to urge the federal Government to do the same. It is of extreme importance to continue education for the northern disadvantaged, in particular the women who in turn become the teachers of the family.

It is also very important that communications be used more constructively. We have at the turn of a switch an educational tool to draw us together and yet we use it ever more often to pull further apart, and I

am talking of television—or radio, but television is the media that most people watch or listen to.

New ways of work to make Canada work must be further investigated as this task force is doing today. No one is comfortable with change if it is laid on. Please continue the consulting process.

The North, as does Eastman and areas outside of Winnipeg, often feels left out. We feel that Winnipeg runs everything and that we do not have much say, and I hear that someone in Brandon says, oh, well, that is the same for us. Please remember to consult with us and just do not give us 24 hours notice you are coming to town. That is another thing that happens. We hear of task forces coming only two or three days ahead of time and some notice of some sort, whether it be in the media or not, I do not know, but people do not have time to fully prepare for task forces and so therefore usually do not come before you. I am proud to see a lot of people here today.

Economic development must continue in the North. People were once very productive in fisheries in the North. The fish processing plants are all in Winnipeg in the South, and they should come north to help provide some employment for people up here so they can have a little more self-satisfaction with their lives. Hydro projects to be built in the North should also have their administration and engineers centralized in the North. We congratulate the Premier on his decentralization program, but urge that northern projects be administered in the North.

I had one question handwritten on the bottom. I know of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Native People, that there is a U.N. working committee, and I have not heard whether there are any Manitobans on that committee, and I am wondering if anybody here would know that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much to you, Ms. Robinson. I do not know whether Mr. Hickes has the answer to that question. George, do you have the answer to that question, or Jim, on whether we are involved in any way?

Mr. Hickes: Not that I am aware of.

Ms. Robinson: I would like to see some of our people there.

Mr. Chairman: You raise a very interesting question. We will find out the answer and we will get back to you.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you.

Mr. Ashton: Thanks for your presentation. I find your perspective to be an interesting one because one thing that has concerned me as a Canadian is the talk of "what if." What if Quebec was to separate—and the suggestion that somehow the rest of Canada would disintegrate automatically.

I am one who believes it is important to do what we can to keep Quebec in Confederation, but it really disturbs me when I hear people suggesting that the Maritimes, for example, should join the United States and I have heard that suggestion from Maritimers.

The former Premier of your former province of residence, I believe, got into some political hot water when that suggestion was made, but I suppose there are those in other provinces who are talking about that. You have had the experience of growing up in the Maritimes, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and for the last 27 years, you said, being here in Thompson.

I am just wondering what your view is. Does Canada have a future beyond this round of constitutional talks? Do you see the Maritimes or others of the country joining the United States, or do you see a stronger Canadian link than some people perhaps give us credit for?

* (1440)

Ms. Robinson: I would certainly like to see a stronger Canadian link. I guess Holly talked previously about the regional areas. The Maritimes has always been a region. As long as I remember it, it has always been, prior to even the days of Newfoundland coming in, it was always the three Maritime provinces and Newfoundland. So that has always been a region, and people who live in that area, that has always been in their heads that this is a Maritime region.

If you live in the Maritimes, you will not be an American, believe me. You are very strong in your background, whether you be French or English. There is a very strong British background in Nova Scotia, but there is also a very strong French Acadian background. I think, one in all, in Nova Scotia, you will find that they are Nova Scotians probably first, Canadians second and then their ethnic group after that, but I would dearly say that Nova Scotians do not want to be Americans and, if anything, would be a little anti-American from the Maritimes. They are very strong Canadians. I think the problem that I heard when I was down last summer was that, gee, you know, if Quebec goes away, because Montreal has always been the holiday area for Maritimers for many

years, you know, we will have to by-pass that and go to Toronto, and that is really not their first choice. So I think Maritimers would be very concerned if Quebec pulled out.

However, I was also in Quebec in September, and I found—this was my fifth visit to Quebec City in a space of years, but I felt very uncomfortable in Quebec this time. There was no one to speak English in the stores, almost ignored. It was never like that years ago; you felt welcome; your dollar was good. But they did not even want your dollar if you could not speak French and I was very, very uncomfortable. I do not know if that is the trend of the times that is coming from Quebec. That was my observation. I was in Sainte-Foy, but I was also downtown—and very, very uncomfortable for the group. I was with 34 women who also said the same thing.

Mr. Ashton: I am just wondering; I think your perspective is interesting, as I said. You are suggesting there is perhaps a lot stronger tie than most people give us credit for. The other thing I found interesting in your presentation though was talking about what its about in terms of being a Canadian, because the last number of years we have been focused on the Constitution as being Meech Lake. I am one of those that believes that Meech Lake was tainted from the beginning by process, and probably as well in terms of content, although ironically it was well intentioned.

I give all the participants credit for having the best of intentions, but many people saw it as being tainted. I would say the majority of people I have talked to in Thompson thought that it was something that was developed in a back-room deal and then was put with an ultimatum gun at their head. They did not like that process as well as some of the things that were in it, obviously, and some of the things that were not in it. Now, in a situation where we have a new beginning, we may not have much time in what seems to be happening in other areas of the country and Quebec in particular, but we do not have to focus on any specific proposal like Meech Lake.

I find it interesting to talk about what it is like to be a Canadian. In a lot of your presentation, you talked about not just constitutional issues but social issues, about equal opportunity, and I am just wondering how you see that in a constitutional framework? I am not saying in a legalistic way, but do you see us in the Constitution putting in a framework that ensures that we do have the kind of equality you were talking about, the kind of social fairness that you were talking about. Does that belong in our Constitution?

Ms. Robinson: Well, of course, I also work a little bit on other committees, and I find that a broader statement is easier to work with than a very stringent and closed statement, because it does not give you any leeway if things are etched in stone in a Constitution. It does not really give you too much leeway to work around problems. However, the social problems of our country, not just Thompson and the North, are growing and growing and growing, and I do not have the solutions for you.

Some of the things that I have done as Executive Director of the YWCA—I deal with women with alcohol problems and social problems and most of it stems from not having the ability to work, not having the ability to be proud of themselves and not having the ability to have a decent home for their children or education for their children.

The failure of life—that I disagree with Ms. Beard—I think it is our federal Government that has imposed upon our aboriginal people the way they live. They have laid on the Government to the reserves and to the Native people in this country of how they could live. They were very self-supporting people and caring people for their children in the centuries ago. We have taken that away from them, we have taken the pride of work away from our Native people.

Until that is addressed, and some of the social problems of our country is addressed, I do not think you are ever going to find a Constitution. You are going to have to address the problems of our country first and deal with those. It will be just like a mother dealing with the bad kid in the house, while you spank the bum and you tell them what is right and wrong and help them get on their way, but you do not stop loving them. You try and steer them, and we have not done that with our aboriginal people and in particular to the women in northern Manitoba, those are the only aboriginal people I know. I know each and every woman in every reserve in this north country, and they all deserve a lot better life than they have had.

Mr. Ashton: It is interesting that you mention in terms of dealing with those problems, because I have found the same thing. If you talk Constitutions to people who are fighting just to pay the bills, fighting just to find a job, to get training or education, Constitutions tend to come well down the list in terms of importance, and I think even in terms of these hearings.

You know at a time when we have bigger events seemingly happening, whether it be the war in the Gulf or the recession generally, it is tough to get people to come out and say what is on their minds. So you are really suggesting, the way I understand it, is that you cannot just deal with the one and not deal with the other. You cannot just have constitutional reform without dealing with a lot of these types of social issues.

Ms. Robinson: I think too, what you said is true, the person that is poor and is looking for food on their table or clothes for the kid's back does not even care if there is a Constitution really and truly. If we do not have laws in this country that are equal for all, then we are not the country I think we are, and it is not the country that I would like to live in.

I think each and every one of us has the chance to survive, the chance to do what we want to do. I had a mother that died many, many years ago when she was 86 years old, and if ever there was a women's libber, it was her. I mean, she knew how to get things her own way, but she did not do it in a way that—I guess, she got it with sweetness instead of with vinegar and with good hard work.

Any one in this country that wants to work and wants to make a better life should have that chance, and they should have the chance whether they live in Newfoundland, or whether they live in Shamattawa, or whether they live in Winnipeg or Vancouver.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions?

Mr. Hickes: Hi, Molly. It is nice to see you again.

Ms. Robinson: Good morning, George. It is nice to see you too.

Mr. Hickes: I had to work with you a few years back on some Adult Education programs, if you recall. I would like to touch a bit on some of the programs that you mentionned here, and a lot of these programs that you mention like with the BUNTEP, New Careers and various programs. A lot of those programs deal directly with aboriginal and visible minority groups. From what you put down here, are you stating that you would recommend that the education opportunities for aboriginal and visible minorities be put right into the Constitution where they would have a chance to further their education?

* (1450)

Ms. Robinson: No, I guess I am not saying that, but I am saying to you as representing the province of Manitoba that, bring these words back, do not lose them. I think everyone has the right to an education one way, shape, form, or the other but there are disadvantaged people in this country. I do not know, maybe that is something the aboriginal people would like to negotiate. I certainly would not be against it.

I have worked with many people and have seen them go through many programs. It is such a delight to see the flowering of learning in a person and to see them become self-sufficient and able to go on with life and to take care of themselves. That is what these programs have done for many, many people in the North. Maybe it is the program that we need across the country.

Certainly I know it is expensive to send children from here to Winnipeg. I have one that has a $20,000 ding with student loans, and that was not what I paid, so it is expensive for us to send our children to the South.

Education, I think, is the answer to many, many problems. There are many uneducated people in the North, many people that do not even know how to read or write, and we are expecting them to know about constitution and be able to speak on constitution. They cannot even go buy groceries because they cannot read the labels. That makes me ashamed of my country.

Mr. Hickes: I would just like to go a little further. I heard a saying one time where you could teach a person or you could give a person a fish a day and you would feed him, but if you taught that individual how to fish, then they could feed themselves for the rest of their lives. I think that is a very valid point. We hear almost daily of the possibility and threats of federal cutbacks in education opportunities. If that—

Ms. Robinson: It has already happened.

Mr. Hickes: Yes, but it probably will get worse, like who knows where the limit will be. Would you as an individual recommend to the provincial Government, whoever it may be future or now, to make sure that those programs are continued, or would you like to see them cut back and—

Ms. Robinson: No, I would say continue them, but maybe they do not need to be continued the way they are. I am saying in here there is new ways of work. We have television satellites. You do not have to bring teachers to a classroom nowadays. You go to university, most of them are on TV anyway. Your professors are teaching our children through television anyway, so why can we not bring the television to the communities and upgrade people at

a lot lesser cost to the Government, but get that education out to the rural areas where people cannot get down to the universities and be taught?

Let us look at new innovative ways to run this country of ours. I do not know, we have sort of gone like this, and it has been a proven fact for a long time. It worked, but we are in the century of motion and movement, and heck, we know when someone gets shot in Iran today. If we can look at that, why can we not look at new ways of work for this country and for this province at a lot less money than we are spending now?

Mr. Downey: Thanks, Molly, for your presentation and your comments in the presentation as it relates to activities that have taken place in the past. I appreciate those kinds of positive comments.

Just a brief comment more than a question, and you do raise a very interesting concept which is being pursued to support education in some of the more remote communities. It is called distant education, which has been embarked upon very successfully this year and is being expanded as quickly as we can.

Again, it comes to the decisions of other levels of Government, I guess, and would tie into the Constitution in this way, that by agreement there were funds from the federal Government supporting the Northern Access and northern programs that you are referring to. By decision of the federal Government not to enter into a further agreement, that takes one major funding partner out of the process, of which it was 60 percent in most cases supporting those programs.

We as a province, as you are aware, are forced with flat revenues and the demands to continue on with all educational programs for all Manitobans and have committed to maintain our level in those programs.

Do you—and the question has maybe been asked—see it as a constitutional matter which should be built in to the Canadian Constitution, that it is the federal Government's responsibility to continue with the education of today with the aboriginal people, which has been their traditional responsibility and have been now offloading it to the provinces? Do you feel that is a federal responsibility to continue?

Ms. Robinson: Yes, I do. I think that through our treaties years ago—I have read some of the northern treaties, but I cannot cite them verbatim. To me there was a contract entered into with the bands in the North. Now I am sure that nobody ever envisioned the expanse of populations when those treaties were first entered into, but I think if you have a deal, you have a deal. If you have said you were going to provide health care, education and housing, or whatever else was in the treaties of the turn of the century, then I think they should be abided by.

Those are contracts. Nobody signs a contract and then welshes on it. At least if they do, you take them to court. I really think that the Canadian Government is welshing a bit on their contracts with the Native people.

Mr. Downey: You would say equally would apply the need to resolve the Native land claims as they were signed?

Ms. Robinson: That is a dandy in the North because so much land is being held in little parcels because nobody can come to a decision, and the Native land claims should be dealt with.

Let us get on with it. I mean the sitting on the fence and you move this parcel this year and that parcel next year—let us get on with life and give the land claims, the settlement and let people know what they own and have that ownership of their land.

Maybe they will start farming again in the North because in Nelson House and other areas, there used to be very productive gardens and things like that. You do not see gardens any more in the North—the odd one in Cross Lake. Nobody produces their own food. It can be done. It has been done in the past.

Mr. Hickes: I would just like to follow up on Mr. Downey's question.

I would just like to see what your opinion is on—like you mentioned about the opportunities for education, and the schools are a federal responsibility because of the treaties. With your vast experience and exposure to living in the North, you are more than likely well aware that a lot of the communities that have a school system also have right next door to it a school system for the community, whether it be for Metis students or for Northerners, whoever's responsibility it is.

Would you feel that those children should have the same access to education opportunities as the treaty children that are being sponsored by the federal Government?

Ms. Robinson: I would like to think all disadvantaged people have access to education.

I know of what you are talking about. I used to live in a little town in Manitoba called Bissett. There was one main school downtown for the workers' children.

The Metis children went to a one-room log house that one of the priests that came to visit were educated in, a very lesser educational outfit.

I would like to see, if there is one school in every area, that the children can all access it. If the majority of the children of that area are aboriginal, then I think it is the federal Government's prerogative to pay for that school and some kick-in for the other citizens that are going to enjoy the privilege of going to that school.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Robinson, one final question, if I may. You have mentioned on the second page of your brief that too much has been made of being Irish or aboriginal, French or English. Too much of one's heritage has been lumped together for governments to showcase. You may have heard Ms. Beard before you say that she would like to see the end of government-sponsored multiculturalism programs. We have had a number of submissions to that effect in Brandon, Dauphin and Winnipeg. What is your view?

Ms. Robinson: Well, I am of mixed view. I think in its time it focused on the differences of our country, but I think it has also split us into being different people and not Canadians first. I do not know whether that makes sense to you, what I am trying to get across.

I am Irish Scot. On St. Patrick's Day, I always wear green. There is no two ways about it. With a name like Molly, I have to be Irish on Saint Patrick's Day. Robbie Burns Day, I love to hear the swirl of the pipes. I guess I am a half-breed, I do not know, half and half. I am Canadian first.

I can remember being at Expo and hearing in one of the theatres there O Canada! being sung and being sung quickly for a change instead of like a dirge. I was so proud of our country that day. I had goose bumps on my back. We were all one at Expo. I was so proud of our country to be there. The showcase in a festival type of thing like that is great, but I think we disserve each other by putting the ethnic origin before Canadian.

I mean, censuses will say, what is your ethnic background? Are you Irish-Canadian? Are you Native-Canadian? Are you whatever? You might want to put, what is your origin of birth? My origin of birth is Canada, and so is my mother's, and so is my grandfather's, and my great-grandfather's. I am Canadian. I am Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

* (1500)

Mr. Chairman: Thank you and thank you very much for your presentation and for your patience again in responding to many questions.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: The next presenter is Mr. Angus MacIntyre, the Director of Economic Development for the City of Thompson. He will be followed by Mr. Gilbert, Joseph Gilbert and then Mr. Ken Collin.

Good afternoon, Mr. MacIntyre.

Mr. Angus MacIntyre (Director of Economic Development, City of Thompson): Good afternoon.

Mr. Chairman: We have your presentation in written form, sir. Thank you. Please proceed.

Mr. MacIntyre: Once I have finished the written notes, I would like to add just a few more comments afterwards to enlarge on a few things. I did not have time to put it all in.

What I would like to do is make a case for meaningful public participation in Canada. The reason for this is quite simple. It is desirable for the Government generally to use the public as a resource to assist in comprehensive planning efforts, in research, in the implementation of programs and in the delivery of many services. This position is based on the following principles.

One, the public has a right to be involved. Two, the public has a responsibility to be involved. Three, the public has knowledge of a technical nature that could be invaluable in any planning effort. Four, it is difficult, if not impossible, to integrate public values and attitudes into programs and policies unless there is an ongoing dialogue in which citizens have their views heard. Five, if it is not encouraged, the public will discover that it has no other choice than to react, often negatively, from a position of poor information.

Why should we do that? Well, the objectives the public should be involved by all three levels of Government in the planning and delivery of our programs and services in order to: (1) Improve the quality of decisions by ensuring that divergent points of views are heard and that all the alternatives are made known before action is taken. (2) To increase the likelihood of having decisions understood and accepted by the public, thereby making the implementation of decisions more likely. (3) Provide the opportunity to educate the public and vice versa on a particular issue or problem before minds are made up and positions are solidified. (4) To encourage a more adequate feedback mechanism for

people to influence policies and decisions in a more direct way than has been possible until now. And (5) To avoid the costly and useless waste of time and energy and money that results from having to sell a particular program or force its implementation over the objections of the public that often does not trust politicians to be acting in their best interest.

This latter point raises the question of the role of the public in any planning exercise or the resolution of a particular problem or crisis. Public participation is not abrogating responsibilities as managers paid to manage. It is not making the public the boss or asking the public to make the decisions. It is not forcing a senior staff and policy makers to argue with what the majority thinks. It is not having a public meeting or asking everyone to be involved in every decision. It is not simply public information or public relations or changing an image.

What public participation is, is providing information in a format that people can use and resources so that informed, intelligent decisions can be made; finding meaningful ways to involve the many publics that exist so that the ideas and concerns of the articulate minority are not given undue consideration or influence in the resolution of any issue, helping individuals, special interest groups, organizations in communities take up the challenge of solving difficult problems facing our society in general and our small or rural and northern communities in particular by using a co-operative effort which uses the best everyone has to offer.

The methods: New ways have to be provided if we hope to obtain the trust and co-operation of the public in any of our efforts. The old ways, public hearings, inquiries, meetings, press conferences, task forces and editorials have to be improved upon and new approaches introduced. In some cases, existing approaches will prove to be inadequate and, therefore, new ways to communicate with people in large numbers will have to be developed, tested and improved upon. Seminars, workshops, panel discussions, public forums, open houses and other less formal and more involving means have to be provided if the experience is to be worth while for the citizen and for the Government.

What is being proposed is not a new bureaucracy. It should not and indeed must not—and I repeat, must not—mean that new programs are brought into being to replace what is being done at present. It simply means making better use of what we have. It makes re-educating and perhaps retraining some staff so that they are more aware of the possibilities and challenges of their job, but it also means entering into a similar process with special interest groups in communities.

The public does not always process all the knowledge and skills necessary to face complex problems in a systematic manner, thereby ensuring final resolution to the long-standing problems, but the combined efforts of Government and community working in a spirit of trust and co-operation can discover innovative solutions to all problems. However, comprehensive planning by the community with a co-ordinated response from Government has not been tried in the past.

I would just like to speak to a few general comments regarding what I think are the major challenges that we face in Canada today. I guess the summary of my preceding remarks really have to do with the fact that Government at all levels, and I include all three levels in this—the local, provincial and federal—really lack a great deal of credibility among the average Canadian person. As we know, in Canada the assumption is democracy begins in your own community when in fact the way things are structured, the way the Government is structured in Canada it is quite the reverse. Most powers are with the federal Government and our Constitution, the way we were founded was that kind of a creation.

So the federal Government has for the most part all the powers, and the provinces are really creatures and have been created by the federal Government, and they have the extent of powers that the federal Government wants us to have. Likewise in terms of the municipal units or the local level, they are really creatures of a province, and certain powers are delegated to them. Many people have a feeling that democracy is in fact the reverse, it begins at the local level and somehow filters up. As we can see from the forms that we are used to, there are varied limitations as you go down the level, and as a representative of the municipality trying to plan a long-term future in terms of where we go as a community, that is very evident to us. We have very limited powers and some very limited flexibility in terms of what we can do in doing that.

In terms of that credibility, we only have to review environmental hearings that have been held and many times they are considered a farce. The process that is being investigated is often well along the way before the environmental hearings begin and there is not a lot of confidence that those things do anything

but rubber stamp decisions that have already been made. We look at hydro development in the province, the Repap, similar kinds of major developments and the processes are often after the fact of certain commitments that have been made.

National parks are another example. The Province of Manitoba is negotiating now on national parks and there are already some opposition and groups forming against that. I say that what is wrong in those cases is a quality process by which people can be involved in those decisions have not been developed.

I think one of the challenges we face in Canada is really a challenge in terms of values. What are our values? In terms of some economic issues this is just a question of providing people jobs or is it more a question of people looking as to how they are going to spend their lives meaningfully and looking for meaningful employment and not just a place where you put eight hours of your life in.

Some of the social problems in our community, drugs, AIDS, one of the major ones being the whole question of loneliness, and I think for some reason in Canada, we are losing a sense of community, a sense of identity that is because of the nature of society, highly transient, mobile. It is becoming more difficult for people to appreciate and realize their roots in our community.

So there are five, I think, critical values that we have to preserve in planning the future of Canada, and I would like to think of these in terms of order of priorities. The first one has to do with people. That is the reason we do everything else, and it is often lost sight of in terms of environmental considerations or economic problems that we face.

The second one has to do with people. The third one has to do with people as does the fourth and fifth. Unless we keep that first and foremost in our mind, we will lose sight of what is really important.

* (1510)

One of the things we do have, I think, in Canada—and I would imagine in the course of your hearings you will hear a lot of complaints and people identifying problems—but one of the things that we need in this country is some models of how things could be better. I am going to suggest to you that the City of Thompson in its own small way, as the Province of Manitoba has, has provided us a few models that will be, I think, worthwhile looking at, not that they cannot be improved upon, but they are well worth being conscious of.

About a year ago the City of Thompson looked at the question of tolerance of others, and indeed that is one of the major problems that you as a task force confront, as we as Canadians confront, is the intolerance of differences. It has to do maybe particularly with the French, but it has to do with all kinds of minorities in our society. If they are Native people, there are many across the country who face an intolerance. If somehow we could help communities and whole regions learn to be tolerant of differences, understand and appreciate those differences, and draw upon them as strengths, rather than obstacles we, as a country, could be better off.

The City of Thompson looked at that a year or so ago, in working through the local multicultural group created a conference on racial harmony. It was a two-day conference, some hundred people participated. As a result of those conferences, there was some follow-up. A lot of problems had been identified. The Chamber of Commerce had dialogued with a follow-up group concerning some of the business practices in town. The Thompson Industrial Commission had been approached in terms of what exactly was the economic impact of the Native people to make people more aware of that. Indeed, the City Council is now in the process of striking a committee on race relations, and those are the kinds of examples that can turn things around.

A few others that the city has embarked upon in the last year, we had a program of downtown improvement where we looked at the need to revitalize the downtown, and in the process of that looked at the importance of involving the public in that process.

So there were three different types of open houses that were held. They were all informal. People drifted in on a one-on-one basis, and they often stayed for several hours. We see from some information about what was happening and what the plans were, but more importantly, their comments we recorded and recorded publicly on flip charts. Before they left the room they were asked to double check to see that what was heard was indeed what was said or what was meant. Then some few months later the city reported back to the general public what was heard and what was being done with all of their suggestions.

Those public open houses the city began in its own shop. It started by going to all the city employees, inviting them to give their comments and those were recorded the same as others.. Then it went to the business community and these were not exclusive.

The general public could attend the business community one, but they invited particularly the business community out to tell this city what it thought the downtown should look like. It did the same thing with the general public—began inviting anyone who wanted to show up at those things.

Another thing the city has done in the last year—I have been employed here for some 16 months now as director of economic development, and that is a new position. It is a commitment the city has to an area that it had thought to give more attention to. Another area is the whole area of culture. The city a year ago this June employed a cultural officer for the city. Then, when the task force came around on arts and culture, they singled Thompson out as one of the few committees who gave arts and culture the kind of priority from the municipal point of view. The city followed through with that by employing a full-time cultural officer to work with the 12 or 15 cultural groups in the community, because they are volunteers and they needed some assistance. That is the kind of commitment that it takes because if we are going to keep people in this community, the cultural aspect, as well as the economic, also has to be kept in balance because one without the other, people will not stay here for any length of time.

Quite recently in this community we had the passing away of our mayor. The mayor had been involved in some politics in this community for over 30 years and the last 12 of those as mayor of our community. It was interesting that quite recently, just before his untimely death, he was talking about the need for finding more meaningful ways to involve the public in the running of their community. He was talking about open forums where the public could come forward, not in the formal context of a council meeting, but much more informally to talk, to dialogue and not to get into a win-lose situation with council, but simply to tap the resources and the ideas of the public out there about how we could solve some of our problems.

Many of the problems we face in this community come to roost at the community level. The question of finances, water and sewer, roads, those kinds of infrastructure, it is many times the municipality that carries the brunt of those, and more and more we seem to be carrying the brunt of those. So he was looking for ways to involve the public in addressing those and say to the public it is your Government, it is not something that we are doing to you, you can be part of this and we want to dialogue with you. The acting mayor or deputy mayor who is filling in in the meantime has responded to that initiative by suggesting that is an excellent idea to follow through and to try to find out ways to involve the public in doing that.

Another initiative the city has been part of along the same lines is to create an open-line radio show, and in co-operation with several of the economic development groups in town, the industrial commission, Mystery Country, which is our tourist group, and the Chamber of Commerce, there will be an open-line show starting very soon in this community on Saturday mornings, again bringing people in, having a particular topic or point of view presented, some dialogue, some effort to make it meaningful, and then opening the lines up for discussion. So just as an example of that kind of thing.

There are some other examples on the provincial level, and as someone who is relatively new to the North, I constantly hear reference to the fact of the efforts that were made during a review of the water resources in the province and the effort to involve the public in looking at water management that has gone on, I guess, in the last couple of years, and people point that out as a very good example of some meaningful participation.

The whole effort at round tables and sustainable development is an example that is often quoted to me. Quite recently, there has been an announcement on a northern development commission. Now those are the kinds of varied examples that I think people can relate to and can find some meaning in, and the Government just on that northern development commission did not make the mistake that has often been made. It has not gone forward and established the commission, put the people in place and sent them around to do their hearings. It said if we are going to involve them—and I do not know how they got this message, but somebody has obviously heard it loud and clear—let us start from Day One. Let us involve them in their terms of reference, let us involve them in the structure of that commission, and let us not just run off and appoint a bunch of people. One of the things they have said loud and clear is it must be for the North, of Northerners, and not someone from Winnipeg coming North telling what the problems are or indeed what the solutions are.

So those are some examples, and we think that kind of consultation from everything from the format to the quality process that we think that will lead to will

mean there will be some quality directions and decisions come out of that.

I guess we would think that reform should begin, if we want to think about Canada reforming itself, at the grass roots at the local level, and just a few closing comments. I think that Canada will be stronger because each region or each province is stronger. If Canada wants to be strong, the idea is not to weaken any particular link in the chain.

Manitoba will be stronger because each of the regions within Manitoba will indeed be stronger, and the regions will be stronger as each community is strong. Much of the strength of Thompson as the hub of the North comes from the fact we are a regional centre, and we provide a lot of regional services to the area, but our idea of development is not to keep those regions dependent on us. If those communities become stronger and can do more for themselves, Thompson will become stronger as a result of it.

We recently had an exchange visit with some people from Sudbury helping us to look at our economy and how we can diversify, and the question of regional Government came up earlier in one of your questions. What they have done in the Sudbury area is they have taken seven municipalities and created a regional form of Government. They have not done away with the existing forms, and they are not duplicating what is existing. It is a way of co-ordinating and planning on a regional basis what makes sense for the region. That has not weakened any of those seven local municipalities. It has made them stronger. I suggest those are patterns for the country.

* (1520)

If we have some regional efforts in Atlantic Canada and the western provinces, there is enough that tie those regions together that allows them to come together with the rest of the country from a position of strength so that each one, solid in its own identity, can then negotiate from a position of strength to doing that.

Just one final example on an international basis, because I think one of the strengths Canada has is to be a model for the rest of the world and indeed we have an example of that. One of our former Prime Ministers, Prime Minister Pearson, was a great believer in the United Nations, as I am sure you are all aware of. He was also a great believer in NATO, and somewhere along the line he got the idea that if NATO could co-operate on military efforts, why could they not co-operate on peaceful efforts.

So back in the early '70s, Pearson approached NATO and had all the NATO countries sponsor a peacetime project, many of them dealing with environmental issues or recycling of those kinds of things, some dealing with general planning issues or what have you. Each of the NATO countries took a peacetime project, developed it, spent a couple of years researching it and then doing something about it, and came back and reported to NATO on their efforts in a peacetime co-operation. That is the kind of example I think people look to Canada for, and that is the kind of example I think we can give to the rest of the country, but beginning at the local level. So I appreciate your time to address you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. MacIntyre. Any questions?

Mr. Ashton: Thanks, Angus, for your presentation. I find it interesting, your perspective, coming from the background that you do in terms of community and economic development, an area that is certainly close to my heart, and talking about this process of constitutional reform in the sense of the process itself. I mentioned to a previous presenter one of the comments I often hear about the Meech Lake Accord, one of the strongest criticisms of that, and I am not saying there were not strong criticisms in terms of content, but was in terms of process.

I am wondering just from your perspective, and I am not asking for sort of a political analysis, but in terms of your experience, how you would rate the process that was used in terms of Meech Lake from the question of the process itself?

Mr. MacIntyre: I think it lacked a great deal in terms of a quality process. I think that was probably the major fault in why it did not come off. It is interesting, you know, the process was well along into the third year before there was any even travelling out to the different regions and discussing some of the issues that were at hand. In my own opinion without at all being partisan, I think the process was the major reason for the failure. I have a lot of respect for some of the individuals who were involved in it, but I say the process was faulty from Day One.

It is interesting that the Government can call upon experts in all kinds of areas but rarely does it call upon anyone expert in how to involve the public when these things are set up. To my knowledge, it has been very seldom done. I guess that is the thing that excites me about this northern commission, because there seems to be a real effort there to go out and develop

the process before you get on to decide what the problems are and how they are going to be resolved. So I would think that is a major reason for its failure was the process.

Mr. Ashton: There were a number of other processes, if you like, put in place by various different provinces, of course, by the federal Government the Spicer commission, if I can call it that. I am wondering what your sense is of the Spicer commission because it does seem to have quite a different sort of approach.

Mr. MacIntyre: Again, I think if they had taken the time—what they are trying to do is very laudable, and I think it is tremendous, great objectives, but if they had taken the time to even consult on who would be on it and how the process would work. I know the urgency of the situation, but giving into the urgency has meant another faulty process.

I look at people like Laurier La Pierre, whom I have tremendous respect for, as heading that, and I think they are fighting a losing battle because of the problem of lack of credibility that people have in those processes producing anything useful, that there is not evidence that what there is being said is being listened to and understood. You see, a public does not necessarily want people to come out and do everything they say. That is not the issue of public participation. You are not going to get complete unanimity or consensus on any particular issue. It is going to be very difficult.

What the public wants, when it says it wants to be involved and to be involved meaningfully in the decisions, is it wants to be heard. It wants to be understood, and it wants to have some evidence that what they have said has been taken into consideration, not necessarily agreed to by everyone, not necessarily followed and then, if it is not being followed, some evidence as to why another course of action was better. Even though we may disagree with the judgment, the public can then live with their decision. That is really what consensus building is all about. There is nobody, I do not think, better in this country who can give us models of that than the Native communities, because their whole history has been that way. The way they work this community, their sense of community, we have a great deal to learn from them, but as we do from every other ethnic group in the country.

I do not think my Scottish background or my heritage takes away from how I feel as a Canadian, but I am very much aware of what that means in terms of the history and the traditions of the Gaelic people in the country. My wife happens to be French-Acadian. French-Acadians are quite distinct from the French in Quebec. They have their own culture, and that is very rarely appreciated in this country. So what people are wanting is a chance to be understood, to be tolerated and to be appreciated in some kind of meaningful way.

Mr. Ashton: I also want to ask about, of course, our own process. In terms of Meech Lake, we are in the rather unique position, not just in terms of the fact there was a task force established, but the fact that this is the only province that I am aware of where there are mandated legislative hearings on most Bills and on the Constitution as well. This really is a continuation of that Manitoba tradition, but I am wondering if you have any comments on how effective this process is and, in particular, any suggestions to the committee on ways it can ensure the process works effectively or maybe improve the process.

Mr. MacIntyre: Well, just one or two quick comments on your process, but going back just for a second to the Meech Lake process, I think the rest of Canada did not appreciate what was in place. There was a lot of pressure to forget going back to the public and just legislate the thing in. There are a lot of people—I am from the East Coast; I went back home this summer. It was amazing the number of people who said, not just that we think Elijah Harper is great, we think the Manitoba Government is, having stood up to a process it put in place and would not give in because of the need to consult with the people.

The Premier made that plain from Day One, the time binds he was in, and did not give in on those. That is one of the cases where people say they stuck with the process. They had an agreement, and they stuck with some principles. They did not give in, because it would have been easier, and the importance of that process was, I think, recognized by the Government and then appreciated by the people, not only the people in Manitoba, but the people across this country.

In terms of the process here, I would suggest to you that this process does not allow a lot of people, who would come out otherwise and speak to you, to come and formally present. It is as informal as probably it could be under these circumstances. You need to record things. You need the translation and so forth, but I would suggest to you that there are other ways, in addition to what you are doing, that if you really

want to get a feel for the people as to how that might be done, that could almost emulate what happens over the kitchen table. The more you can create that kind of an atmosphere—the people are anything but apathetic.

There is one thing I have learned in some 30 years in community development—and I have heard it said of many communities that I worked in, people are apathetic. Nothing is further from the truth. They feel powerless. They feel hopeless. They are frustrated, but they are not apathetic, and they have not stopped caring. So they are there, and they want to be heard. They just do not believe anyone is listening.

Mr. Ashton: You are suggesting that we need to perhaps find a way that is a bit more informal. I understand the point you are making, because that is the sense I have to in talking to a lot of people. They feel intimidated by this process. If you talk to them over their kitchen table, if you talk to them personally, they have opinions. Boy, do they have opinions, but when it comes to this process—you have had experience at public speaking, and I think most of the people here today have had experience at speaking in public, but a lot of people feel all of a sudden that they just cannot participate. They do not know enough, particularly when it comes to Constitutions. I mean that is the most intimidating process, I think, of the lot, dealing with Constitutions.

So you are suggesting, before we can really have a defined Manitoba position, we have to get some way of getting the, shall we say, non-vocal majority to have some input as well?

* (1530)

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes. If I could very quickly give you an example of that. Some years ago I was asked by national Parks to go into Newfoundland where the local community was shooting at the wardens, and I mean literally—shooting because their lands had been expropriated and some 15 communities had been relocated. There were obviously problems with that. One of the things Parks said is that the local people would not talk to them.

Going in there, what I found is that this type of hearing would obviously not have worked. Even open houses held in a school where people drifted in and was somewhat informal, even that was too formal. So we found what Newfoundlanders call cuffers. A cuffer was what happened over the back fence or when someone came off the boat down on the dock, they talked about something that was really meaningful to them, something that they cared about. It was not just a yarn, it was some community issue.

So we organized cuffers all around the province. We held them in halls or in kitchens, wherever we could hold them. We filled some 152 pages of flip charts with writing that small of what they were saying. These were the people that Parks felt would not talk to them. That was only 10 communities involved, and they filled that many pages of flip-chart paper. In their opinion that was the first time that they had been meaningfully listened to.

Then they did something with those; they just did not talk to them. They explained to them beforehand what they were going to do with what the people said. They did not agree with them all. People wanted to hunt moose in the park, and Parks did not agree with that, but they found out ways they could help them snare rabbits in the park and still maintain park values.

So what we found is that if you really listen and tune in, the communities co-operating with Government can be terribly creative at finding solutions that we never thought were possible, and I have seen that happen on all kinds of issues. I have seen whole communities become alive and active in that kind of a process.

Mr. Chairman: Well, Mr. MacIntyre, I am going to put your hand to the fire. I want you to write me soon, like today or tomorrow, at our address on the pamphlet, and give me some of your expertise but in concrete form what you think we could usefully do as a task force beyond what we are doing, and I would be very delighted to receive that. Do you think you could do that?

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes, I would be glad to.

Mr. Chairman: I would be very pleased if you would do that.

Mr. MacIntyre: And I do appreciate the process you have in place and that it is a sincere effort to—

Mr. Chairman: We are always looking for better ways, and you are a man with some experience here. I do not know what the Manitoba equivalent of a cuffer is, especially in mid-January, but you would certainly know what it is in the North. So just drop me an informal line with some specific ideas. I would really be pleased.

Mr. MacIntyre: Glad to do that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and thanks for your presentation.

Mr. Joseph Gilbert. We could bring the microphone to you, sir, if you want to just—no, I should not make that offer, I guess that is not quite possible.

Mr. Joseph Gilbert (Private Citizen): I would like to apologize for not having a written presentation. Molly gave a good excuse, but then she had a good presentation, so she did not even need the excuse.

Mr. Chairman: We have a lot of people, sir, who are presenting without any written script at all and it is not at all necessary.

Mr. Gilbert: What I have is a unique perspective on separation. I have not heard this before on radio or television or in the newspaper. My background is I am a first-generation Canadian. I came south from Alaska to where it was warm and things were cheap, and that was Thompson.

I grew up in the States, and I am sure you all realize the greatest thing that ever happened in the United States was the Civil War. The Civil War was not fought over slavery; that was one of the issues, but the basic issue in the Civil War was the break-up of the country. Most of the people in the country said: we do not care whether you are happy or unhappy; we have one country and it stays one country.

I have read extensively, especially recently, about the Civil War, and what we are going through in Canada fits right in with what they did in the States in 1860 with the South having their referendums and their seceding from the States and the North saying we have one country—the union must and shall be preserved. I can see some of the same actions happening in Canada where you have people saying, we are going to leave, we do not care about you; and other people are going to say, no, this is one country, we do not care whether you are in it or not, but you are not going to break it up for all of us. I think the secession of Quebec would break up Canada and what would be left would not be Canada anymore. I think this would happen.

Particularly I could see somebody from Quebec going into the RCMP saying: Give me your weapons, give me all your keys, give me all your records; and going to the depository and saying, we want the money from Canada, Canada is a foreign country now, this is our money. I could see that working its way into a civil war.

As far as the Constitution goes, the Americans had a similar situation, talking about unanimous consent to changes in the Constitution. The first United States Government was a confederation where everything had to be done by unanimous consent and it fell apart. I do not think anything in our Constitution should ever demand unanimous consent for anything. It is just not very democratic. Anyway, there has been a lot of talk about an equal Senate. A Senate where 25,000 people in Prince Edward Island have the same power as a million people in Ontario is not equal representation.

One very, very slight but practical problem to involve Canadians more would be for somebody to write some musical words to The Maple Leaf Forever. I do not think I have ever heard it played since I have been in Thompson, but it used to be the way you identified Canadian music and now you cannot even play it because the words are so inappropriate. I think if somebody were to offer a prize for writing a set of exceptional words or words for today, it would strengthen people's feelings toward Canada.

I think the idea of Quebec's separation is a more pressing problem than most people feel. It is not possible for a province to walk away from Canada and say, okay, that is Canada, we are out. That is all.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, sir. Any questions?

Mr. Ashton: I appreciate your presentation, your perspective. It is particularly interesting given your background from the States, your comments on the Senate. I take it you do not want to see an Americanized type of Senate in Canada because really the Triple-E Senate is very much the same type of Senate that the Americans have. What is your view on—perhaps I should ask you more directly. Do you think it should be abolished, kept the way it is? What are your general feelings on it?

* (1540)

Mr. Gilbert: I really feel it should be kept the way it is. The American Senate evolved at the very beginning just the same way as in the United Nations. Each country had one vote. That is the way the American Senate came about. I do not think you could go back to the beginning of Canada and say, all right, we will invent something. We have had a Senate for a long time.

In fact, every American state, except Nebraska, has a state Senate and a state House of Representatives. They both have to be based on population because some 40 or 50 years ago the Supreme Court ruled it is not equal when you have a city with one Senate seat and a rural area with the same representation.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions? Thanks very much again, Mr. Gilbert.

Mr. Gilbert: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Are there any other folks here who would like to make a presentation this afternoon? Anyone else? If not, ladies and gentlemen, going once, going twice—ah, good! Come forward, please.

Ms. Jacqueline Dunning (Canadian Paraplegic Association, Thompson): Hi, my name is Jacqui Dunning. I am regional representative for the Canadian Paraplegic Association in Thompson. I am not a paraplegic. I am just a representative for them. My disability stems from TB in my hip when I was a child and then it just progressed.

I have never done this type of thing before, but I am deeply concerned about what is happening to our country. I am French Canadian. My dad spoke French. I never spoke French; I have lived 60 years without it. It does not bother me either way. I have managed quite well. I feel it should be optional. I have been upset about the money put out for French speaking. That is my opinion, because we are in a very multicultural society, and we know that the aboriginals would like their language spoken. I feel it is time that we quit pushing French. That is my personal opinion.

As far as Quebec separating, I feel that they can separate, but as long as it does not affect the rest of Canada, because there are many different cultures in Canada.

I was raised in the centre of Winnipeg, and when I went to school, there were not too many Natives. I was made fun of. I was called—they could not make up their minds what I was, if I was Japanese, Chinese, Indian or nigger, as they put it. It did not matter to me. I had a stepmother who taught me that all people are the same.

At my school—I went to Victoria-Albert. That was a long time ago; it is still there. There were many people there. There were Chinese, there were—well, there were not as many immigrants as there are now, but there were several. You never heard them complain about our religions in our school, the Lord's Prayer or our Canadian ways. I never heard any complaints about that. They accepted a country that took them in, and they fit in. They had their own culture. I lived close to Chinatown. They seemed happy. They did not bother anybody, and nobody bothered them. We were all friends. There were many different nationalities that we were friends with.

I really feel that it is going to be harmful. I feel the gentleman who spoke previous to me put it very well, that we are in bigger trouble if we allow—well, we cannot stop Quebec from separating from us, but I feel that we are all Canadians. I feel that we should do our best to keep it all Canadians.

That is all. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Any questions? Okay. Thanks, Ms. Dunning. We appreciate you coming forward; it was great. Anyone else? Anyone else this afternoon?

Mr. Bob McCleverty (Private Citizen): I would just like to say that—well, I have not a presentation prepared. I came to see a little more of what was happening. I am from a remote community.

Mr. Chairman: Could you just give us your name, sir, because everything you say is going to be recorded in fine fashion?

Mr. McCleverty: I am sure everybody on this panel knows who I am. My name is Bob McCleverty. I am presently the mayor at Thicket Portage. I have some concerns. I will be putting a presentation in, hopefully, before the end of the month when you people are finished. I will be able to make the presentation in Winnipeg, but I am concerned that the information in regards to this process never made it out to the communities, and I do not know why. Again, I get concerned about how we are notified about these things.

I am concerned that some of the Native organizations, and maybe they will be presenting this evening, are not here. We are supposed to have organizations that represent our communities. It seems to me unfair that they are not here representing us, and also, they have not even discussed this with us, so it makes it very difficult sometimes when we have to deal with an issue such as this.

I am concerned too in the process of how this works, because I had made a presentation when you people were up here during the Meech Lake, and I can honestly say I never heard back from you people. I discussed Senate reform and other things in that presentation. I have some concerns listening today with some of the questions that you are asking, because I think there are concerns that have to be addressed—when Mr. Carr mentioned about what kinds of things, if we were going to regionalize things. I think one of the concerns we have here is the fact that we have a seaport that could be better used. If

we were using it, as western provinces, the port itself could probably be utilized better. We could be looking at ways of doing those kinds of things.

I am concerned that, for instance, our environment, the federal Government seems to have control over the hearings that take place, and I think that can be done better regionally. We have seen what has happened in Saskatchewan when they did not agree with a decision that was made by the federal Government.

I think things like the post office—we all see troubles with those federal agencies and I think those kind of things can be handled better regionally. I think when we talk in terms of the Senate, in terms of population, one of the concerns that I had mentioned in the Meech Lake, I think that we have to get people more involved locally. By voting those people in, they have more responsibility from the region that they come from. So they will listen to the concerns that come from those regions, rather than being off somewhere. I think some of the decisions that are made for the West are made with politicians who are not even aware of the situation that exists here, and those are the kind of things I would like to see changed.

Like I said, I am saying a lot right now, but I am going to be putting most of this in a presentation to you people, making a proper and formal presentation in Winnipeg.

* (1550)

Mr. Chairman: I presume you would send that in to us in writing, sir, in the task force office.

Mr. McCleverty: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: I am a little concerned about your comments concerning being informed. I will tell you what we did. I guess we started our newspaper advertising just after the turn of the year, early in January, and there was a series of newspaper advertisements of fairly good size. Then we had a blanket of radio advertising that has occurred in the last 10 days to two weeks.

Mr. McCleverty: Maybe I could just stop you for a minute, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. McCleverty: I seem to tell every hearing—no matter if it is Manitoba Hydro, or if it is MTS or the Meech Lake Task Force or now this task force—one of the problems we have in the North is that the communications to our communities is very sparse and not a good way of doing it, it seems, because first of all, we have communities in this province that get their TV from Montreal. They do not get it from Manitoba.

We have communities that have no access to newspapers unless somebody brings it in. Now, I have to admit that Mr. Lowery, and this is a plug for the Free Press, does send out to the bayline communities once a week, a package to the councils of all the newspapers. So I know that those things are starting to happen, but in some communities they do not have that access. The local newspaper—the only part of the Thompson paper that we get is the Nickel Belt; that usually comes out a week after it is published. So sometimes when items like this come along we only hear about them in the last few days.

The CBC, for instance, has broadcasts out of Thompson we do not get in Thicket Portage, for instance, because it is on FM. We do not get the signal out there. So the assumption is that the information is being related to the appropriate people, and that is not necessarily the case. I think that we have to work on ways. One of the things you have access to in the morning—for instance, everybody has the TV on in the morning, CBC TV—the ones who do get it—to listen to the bingo or to the local channel to listen to local news because they do broadcast Mikisew Morning.

Like I said, there are some communities like Brochet gets it from Montreal, so I mean they would not be aware of some of the things that are happening.

Mr. Chairman: Well, then, what do we do?

Mr. McCleverty: Well, there are two or three ways I think that councils, the communities themselves, and you have the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) on the panel here. He could have better access through the Department of Northern Affairs to the communities when these things start to happen, or getting the people to send directly letters to the community councils so that they can have them a month ahead of time so they could have time to prepare and have this go to their own councils so they would have local input.

I think those are two quick options right off the bat. Farther down the line I am sure that with all the people who are within the Government and deal with the communities would know about these things, and they can also be people who can provide this kind of information to these communities.

Mr. Chairman: I am listening very carefully to what you are saying—

Mr. McCleverty: I realize that.

Mr. Chairman: —because we want to communicate as well as we can. We gave all the information to Mikisew Morning, but they will not take paid advertising, so it had to be as a public service announcement that they made it. In other words, if they felt that they wanted to.

Mr. McCleverty: I am not blaming, and I am not looking at this panel or the people. I am also looking at the organizations that represent us, whether it is the MMF or whether it is the MKO or whether it is the NACC. They are all organizations that deal with you people and have some knowledge, or should have knowledge, but these organizations do not seem to be getting this information out to the communities. I have some concern about who is doing what for whom because I do not think you are hearing from, as we say, quote, the grass root people who have some concerns. Some people are not even aware of the concerns that are out there, and if they did I am sure they would be here to voice their concerns.

So I just do not want you to think that because there are a few people here or there is not a lot of interest from the outlying areas, that it is not there. It is just that they have not had either an opportunity to prepare, or they have not had the notice that this was taking place.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, and maybe the format is wrong. The previous gentleman said to us that this is too formal a process for some people to feel comfortable. Maybe it is that as well.

Mr. McCleverty: That is the other thing I thought. When I saw the way they were doing it in the Maritimes and when they sort of had all these little sessions where they—fact that, if I am not mistaken, they had so many people come out they had to break it into two groups, and it was sort of a kitchen conversation with a cup of coffee and everybody sat around in a circle and they asked questions as well as heard some of the responses from the people who are in the know.

I mean, one of the concerns I have here is that you are sitting here asking for our opinions, but we are not hearing from you what all the concerns are, and like I said, some of the people do not know all of the concerns because they have not had access to all the concerns.

When I say some of these communities only get one TV station, the concern I have here is that if we are going to have a public forum, it should be information given as well as received. I think one of the concerns I have is I have not heard any information from the panel here. I have heard you listen to presentations and ask questions about presentations, but I still have not heard some of the concerns, how you people who are taking back those concerns and are going to put them together on our behalf, how some of you people feel about it—and have sort of given us a presentation from how you people feel too.

Yes, I think it is a dialogue here, and to me we are not having a dialogue. What we are doing is, we are giving a presentation and that is it. You are saying thank you very much; we are going to take that back and we will see what we can do with that—with what we are going to put together. We still do not really know what some of your thinking is. That is just from my observation. It is not a criticism by all means.

Mr. Ashton: Actually, I think you are right in terms of communicating with a lot of communities. It is different in each community. I mean, some communities do get the radio signals in the area. Some do not. Most do not. You have got different situations in terms of newspapers, et cetera. Really, the best way for most communities is sending a letter to everybody in the community and certainly for everybody on the council because you are only guaranteed—it may be late sometimes, a letter may arrive after the meeting—the only guaranteed way of doing it.

I wanted to raise just one point and ask this question. I know this is not your formal presentation, but the concern has come up about whether the committee should be holding meetings in some of the aboriginal communities, the outlying communities, particularly given the importance of aboriginal issues. I am wondering if one way of resolving this—and you cannot get into every community, I am not suggesting that—would be if the committee would consider holding at least a number of meetings in some of the aboriginal communities in particular, some of the more remote communities, getting the kind of perspective you will get if you get into Thicket Portage or Split Lake or some of the other communities in the areas.

Mr. McCleverty: The one thing I was going to mention—it just crossed my mind that we had asked Manitoba Hydro to do, when they were doing their hearings, and they did this for us last year—was the

fact that, instead of having a formal setting, we had asked them if they would make an effort to go out to some of the communities. Now what they did was three of them came out to our community. They came over our winter road; they spent a few hours there; and the people talked to them, not just about the rates but their problems as well. It was very good. They found it most interesting and most illuminating, the fact that they learned something about not only the community and how it lived but also some of its concerns.

* (1600)

Now I do not know if this is possible, but I look up and I see seven people sitting on the panel here. If seven people went out to seven different communities and had a community meeting with each of seven different communities and just said: we are part of a task force; this is what we want to try and do; we want to hear some of your concerns; and this is what the consensus of our group is or what we are trying to do—and get some dialogue. Maybe that might be an approach.

I do not know if that is affordable or possible, but it is something that might be looked at. Because of the legalities of it and how we want to keep everything legal, we have this kind of format. As it has been said earlier on, people are intimidated, but in a community where they can sit around and they feel the comforts of being in their own home and having you come there to see them for a change—I do not have to tell some of you people this, you already know all this. But the thing is, that is something I think Mr. MacIntyre was also trying to point out when we say we want the people to be involved. I think the more that we can see those kinds of things happen, you are going to get a variety of responses and a better type of information, so that your judgments and the decisions that you people have to make are going to be ones that are going to be more acceptable to the people you are making those decisions for. By all means, I do not want you to stop what you are doing, because I think anytime we can have people come up and listen to concerns, that is important. I think that what they do with what they hear is more important.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, sir. Any other questions? You will not forget to write us now, will you, because we are going to hold you to that?

Mr. McCleverty: You certainly do not have to worry about that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, that is great. Yes, madam.

Ms. Valerie McClurg (Private Citizen): My name is Valerie McClurg, and I have been a teacher in Thompson for 20-some years. Normally, when politicians come in the door or down the street, I run the other way, so this is a very unusual venture for me.

I am sorry I did not hear the beginning of Holly Beard's presentation, because someone at the back said, what an articulate woman; people would be intimidated, after hearing her, to come forward. Someone else said, we have to be afraid of making decisions on hearing from an articulate minority and deciding that was what all of Canadians were feeling. Based on those two things, I figured now is the time to stand up and say something.

First of all, for us to proud of Canada and to have the kind of strength that will keep Canada together, we have to have the same rights, freedoms and opportunity regardless of where we live in Canada. Sadly, Canada has been changing. In 21 years in the classroom, the dynamics of what is going on between children of different cultures is changing. Twenty years ago, we celebrated and taught children in the classroom on how they were the same and what our differences were. When I had non-English speaking students, there was a French child, there was a Portuguese child, there was a Native child from the North. We took all three children, and we taught them the same. I am not saying taught them the same thing, but we met their needs.

Now what is happening is, I do not understand why, we are pumping more dollars in multiculturism. Instead of saying we are Canadians of different ethnic backgrounds, we have groups saying not, I am Canadian, but I am French, I am aboriginal, I am this or that. When we have representation through population, it is no longer working.

About 15 years ago, I was reading a sociology text that said at that time, in this province, for every one—excuse the language, but for every white Caucasian baby born, there were two aboriginal babies. Of course, that has changed.

I liked Holly Beard's idea of regionalism. The federal Government gives educational dollars to help teach aboriginal children in this province. I have language enrichment classes where aboriginal children can go out and get expertise help to develop English skills. I also have a child that came over from Portugal, who cannot speak English, who cannot go into that classroom, because that is federally funded

money and you have to be aboriginal to go in there. Now, is that not reverse discrimination?

Our dollar is just for the simple learning disabled child. We get a provincial grant—we are down to the provincial level now—and the provincial Government gives Manitoba a block budget for their learning disabled population. The difference is it costs our school district over $12 an hour to put an educational system in with one student. Down south, for that $12 they can service two children. What I am saying is that our dollars need to be split not provincially but maybe, as Holly says, regionally.

Yes, the children of the North, whether they are aboriginal or whether they are French or whether they are East Indian or whatever, the children of the North are disadvantaged.

We need more money for education, not for Manitoba, for Quebec, but for this region. I am saying maybe regionalism does have potential here in that we could then sit down and say, what are the needs of this region? Definitely yes, there is need for more money in education than in other places.

Definitely, there is need for more social services. Our social services are not working because of funding. They are stretched to the limit where they are not effective. Social services make promises that they will do counselling with families. Whether it is alcoholism or break-ups and stuff, they will come in and say: we will deliver this level of service to you; you can count on this help. It does not come through because all of a sudden the caseloads are getting so heavy that nobody gets the help.

If you spread the dollar too thin, it does not become—if you take a dollar and you divide it in half, you do not say you have half that amount of service. It does not work that way; it does not go proportionately down.

So, maybe by regionalism, we can take a study of what the needs of the people are in that region. Whether it is provincial dollars or federal dollars, change the proportion of money that goes to the region according to what their needs are. The populations are going to be changing in those regions.

Another example of money wasted is in communities where there are federal schools and then the provincial schools, standing side by side. How else do you draw lines between people when some of the federally funded schools have better facilities, newer equipment? We have to look at how our dollars are being spent.

I am saying that representation by population may be creating the problems in Canadians where we are looking at the other and saying, no, we do not have the same opportunity, the same freedoms and the same rights because of where we are living in Canada. This is not a great place to live. I think Holly's ideas have some merit.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. McClurg. Mr. Carr has a question for you.

Mr. Carr: I just want to know if you were serious or joking when you said that you generally walk the other way when you see a politician.

Ms. McClurg: All the time. Mr. Ashton can attest to that. It is the truth.

Mr. Chairman: We could bite on that one, Ms. McClurg, but we will not.

Mr. Carr: I am going to resist the temptation to respond personally to that, but I want to know why.

* (1610)

Ms. McClurg: Why? I always thought you never really could make a difference, that one person could never really make a difference. I always paid the most attention to the promises that were made and never kept, so I always painted all politicians with the same paintbrush. I also have to have the courage to say, which I am sure most politicians would like to have said, that I really do not appreciate paying for my ancestors' mistakes. Yes, we made agreements, we signed treaties. At the time that those people signed them, they had the best intentions on earth. They did not understand the economics, the population growth, the cost.

I am saying, yes, we should take a look at what we may do to bring people closer together, but to say a treaty was signed a hundred years ago, and because my forefathers did this to another group of people—I object to that. I would like to start with this generation. Let us work with the people that are living. If we have been unjust to any group in our generation, then let us make that a priority.

Mr. Carr: It is only recent promises that you want kept.

Ms. McClurg: How can we keep promises that are hundreds of years old the way populations are growing and changing?

Mr. Carr: I do not want to make a long speech, but I—

Ms. McClurg: No, I would like you to make a long speech because if I come here with misconceptions and poor ideas, other Canadians are holding the same thought.

Mr. Carr: Yes, I will tell you what the frustration is. We have been sitting in on these hearings now for, I guess this is day four. In some communities we hear an intolerance against Quebec, French, Sikhs, multiculturalism, and many of these expressions are fair and they are deeply felt.

I just found myself the target of what I consider to be a piece of intolerance, and that is that when you see a politician, you run the other way. While we are often the object of jokes and ridicule, and while people will take pot shots because we sit up here and we are fair game, and often we feel that we ought not to defend ourselves because if we do, we will just fuel more cynicism, I believe that it is an expression of cynicism because we are here, we are vulnerable, we are exposed, we are reaching out to people, we are asking for your opinion of very important things, and you want to run away, you want to go somewhere else, you want to go to the next room or down the street. How can we even pretend to be doing a job of consulting with the people to whom we are responsible if that kind of frustration and cynicism prevails?

That is why I chose this as the moment to intervene and ask you if it was a joke or if you were serious and to try and penetrate that psyche, and you are not the only one. We get this, I do not know about all the time, but certainly from time to time. I do not think we should just take it. I think politicians should say, well, what do you expect of us, and having posed that question, to say that we are no different and no better than you, that we get our strength from you.

We are no stronger than the strength you give us and every four years or sometimes more often than that, you dump us and tell us to go and find another profession. That is fair enough. Maybe after having said that, I feel a little better now, but I want to find a way to break through some of this incredible cynicism and start talking to each other.

Ms. McClurg: You have been here four days too long because what I am saying when I said that is, something good is happening here. I said I did run. I said I want to have the courage to say what is on my mind. It may be the first time, and you are right, you have the right to say I resent that you ran for the last 21 years, but what you are doing here is right, and I am not sure if it was Joe or somebody else before said this is what we need.

We need to hear what the people think, and you do not have to agree with everybody who talks, but we need to hear what all of the people think so that when we make our decisions we are not shoving it down their throats later. It is the people's voices and then you, with your wisdom and experience, sift through the information and choose it.

That was actually a compliment to the group of you, because if you could get someone who has been as chicken as I have in the past to come up, then you have got a really good chance of getting a lot of opinions. I think that is the important thing, that people are so afraid that their opinions are wrong—but we can be. We are so scared to say something in case our idea is different from everybody else.

Just in this room today I have found out that things that you were always scared to say, you have got at least three other people who have been thinking the same thing but were afraid to say it, you know.

Mr. Carr: Well, I am very glad you did decide to come.

Just so that we can leave this on a positive note, politicians are not afraid about being misquoted. They are afraid about being quoted correctly, because very often we say things that we are sorry we have said. I am glad that we were able to break through at least a little barrier with each other today. Thank you.

Ms. McClurg: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: You are not off the hook yet, Ms. McClurg.

Ms. McClurg: Oh, I thought you did not want—

Mr. Chairman: Your local Member wants to ask you a question.

Mr. Ashton: Well, we might be on the same side of the street for a little bit longer in the future. I think you make a very important point about the process, because after 10 years in public life myself one thing that never ceases to amaze me is the alienation that is out there. I think part of it is because so much has been taken for granted in terms of process.

I saw it myself when I was first elected, people who automatically assume you are going to do this, that or the other, pattern behaviour—oh, we will see you again in four years. People have come to be conditioned to expect that.

I really think what you did today is important, not just for the political process because we will have a political process no matter what country we have, but

it is important for Canada because there are too many people out there—and I see them day in and day out—who are cynical and perhaps have not had the contact of today. That is why I asked the question earlier in terms of process. How do we reach out to them in this area and other areas?

I think what you were talking about is really the bottom-line problem. It is not wording on pieces of paper. It is people feeling that they are just being left out.

Ms. McClurg: Okay. I think some of the cynicism is the pressure at election time, you know, the mud throwing and all the rest of the battles, but you have certainly, through your actions—in this community I have heard half a dozen people, in the last period since the election, talk about how you have gone to bat for them. I know at least two of those six did not vote your way during election, but they will next time because you have been accessible.

It is the beast of the election where people feel harassed, you know, like you get phone call after phone call. I guess through politicians' actions after the election is when they gain credibility. I must say you have gained a lot of credibility in your actions, not during election time, after. I appreciate that and people out there are noticing.

Mr. Chairman: That is getting mighty close to a paid political announcement, Ms. McClurg.

Ms. McClurg: Just for one person's benefit.

Mr. Chairman: It will be on the public record.

Ms. McClurg: Okay, this better be on the public—

Mr. Chairman: I am only joking with you. Mr. Hickes would like to ask you a question.

Mr. Hickes: I would just like to ask you to clarify something for me. When you talk about aboriginal rights, treaties and stuff like that and if we go back into—you said 100 years, or more than 100 years ago—I have heard aboriginal people say, we were not found because we were not lost. We were here. The Europeans came over and we welcomed them into our land, and that grew from there. So, when they wanted to reap the benefits of Canada, that is my understanding that they offered a treaty which really had two different cultures that could not understand one another to a great extent.

So, when you say, I do not want to be paying for something that my ancestors signed 100 years ago, I think, on the other hand, you will hear aboriginals say, I do not want to keep collecting something that was worth whatever it was 100 years ago compared to today. I am just wondering from your comment if you disagree with educational opportunities and the access to medical and stuff for aboriginal people, which from your statement would say that the non-aboriginal people are paying for which they, in your opinion, should not be. Is that the way you—

* (1620)

Ms. McClurg: No, that is not my opinion. I said I object to working upon or working from an agreement that was made by my ancestors or because who was the first Canadian here, who was the second, what we did to each other in history. I said that was my objection. I said, let us work from this generation.

If we look at aboriginal people as Canadians who have needs—and, yes, I fully support the educational programs in the North. I would like to see that program offered to the people of the North because they have the need, not because they are aboriginal. What I would like to take out is the word "aboriginal." We have Canadians in the North who are in need of education. Let us pump dollars into it. We have Canadians in the North who are in need of—let us pump money into it. I was certainly supportive of the programs. I am just saying, not because of a past but because of this generation's needs.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks very much, Ms. McClurg. Anyone else? Well, ladies and gentlemen, we will be back at seven tonight in this room. We would be delighted if you would care to join us or tell anyone else you know who might like to join us. We will be here as long this evening as there are people who would like to share their views with us. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon.

* * *

The hearing took recess at 4:23 p.m.

After Recess

The hearing resumed at 7 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our second public hearing in Thompson. We had a very enjoyable afternoon with some interesting presentations between 1:30 and five this afternoon. It is a pleasure to be back with you this evening.

The rules for presentation are very simple. This table is for your convenience. If you are wanting to share some thoughts with us, when your name is

called we just ask you to come forward and speak into the microphone so that we can catch your words to be transcribed. There will be official day-by-day booklets which will print that which has been said, and all those who have presented, in fact, will receive a copy of the transcript to see your words in deathless prose forever.

If you have your name on the list, of course, we will be calling those who have already indicated they would like to speak with us this evening, but if you feel moved during the course of the evening to add your name to the list, that is easy. We simply ask you to signify to the staffperson at the rear of the room that you want to speak, and we will add your name to the list.

After you have made your presentation, the task force Members may well want to ask you questions. So if you will just be kind enough to stay in the chair, I will find out if any questions are to be asked and then we will let you go once the question period is over.

I would like to introduce the Members of the task force who are here with me this evening, some regular Members and some who are being good enough to substitute for regular Members. The task force consists of six Members of the Legislature, three from the Government side, three Conservatives, two New Democrats and one Liberal, with myself as the neutral Chair.

I am going to begin on my far right tonight. You will recognize the gentleman at the end of the table, I am sure, Mr. Steve Ashton who is the New Democratic Member of the Legislature for this fine constituency of Thompson. Next to him is the Honourable Jim Downey. Mr. Downey is the Conservative Member of the Legislature for Arthur-Virden, and he is Minister of Northern and Native Affairs in the Government of Manitoba. On my immediate right is Mrs. Shirley Render. She is the Conservative Member of the Legislature for St. Vital. Going to my far left is—who is at the end of the table?—Mr. George Hickes. George is the New Democratic Member of the Legislature for Point Douglas. Next to him is Mr. Marcel Laurendeau who is the Conservative Member of the Legislature for St. Norbert, and on my immediate left is Mr. Jim Carr, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba and Member of the Legislature for Crescentwood. I am Wally Fox-Decent.

So ladies and gentlemen, we are ready to begin. I would ask Mr. Robert Sumner if he would come forward, the first presenter this evening.

Mr. Robert Sumner (Private Citizen): See if this thing scares me or not.

Mr. Chairman: Did you say—no, no. Just relax, sir. We are really glad you are here. Take your time.

Mr. Sumner: After receiving this today, I understand a little bit of what you wish. Some of the comments I have here may not seem to apply in many cases, well, in a few cases, more to the point.

The concern of the people of Manitoba, in general terms I believe after talking in conversations, is the state of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and economics as one pertains to the other. Now in order for constitutional rule or freedoms or rights or privileges, in my opinion, to work not only in Manitoba or in Saskatchewan or in any part of this nation, there has to be an equal opportunity for the citizens to have input directly to their Government Members.

Mr. Fox-Decent—by the way, I listened to one of the programs when he was on an interview on our CBC station—a number of people came up with a system very much like they have in Israel, in France. The point that I understood was this, as part of our Parliament and Constitution, if we wished to do it so, or you gentlemen and ladies wished to do so for us, is that when we have an election and 50 percent of the people turn out to vote and a Party is elected with 28 percent of the voters—those numbers are not necessarily valid, but I think the point can be taken—and they wind up literally in a majority Government, we are not represented. We are not represented.

* (1910)

Therefore, this is one method that I have heard—it is not mine, a lot of people have thought of it though—that you must have 60 percent in that House. In other words, the Party that has won must take from the other Members to fulfill that 60 percent representation. Part of this is the Canadian citizen's own fault. People do not get out to vote. I have looked up a few situations, and most of them I do not think Canadians would care about. There is, however, one that the Australians have, and it rubs people, it offends people a little bit, but this is where if you want a good Government you must vote. So saying, it is then the obligation of the society and Government to provide for these people to vote. In turn, as a citizen

if I fail to vote, for example, immediately it is a $500 fine. That is one solution.

Second could mean in our society in Canada doing work with people who cannot vote, in order—and let us include the $500 fine—that they may understand what this right and privilege means to them. We are getting Governments in this country, provincially and federally, by default, and this has got to stop. A Constitution that does not represent the people, good, bad, indifferent, is of no value to the Canadian citizen. The Bill of Rights must have teeth where no provincial or federal Government, once it is imbued or put into place, can amend without the consent of a duly and equally elected Government.

The second alternative, and I have heard this bandied around, and I have said this myself, in fact, since I am 18, why do we have a titulary House of Lords in Canada? We call it the Senate, and after the last three months it is a House of convenience. This method is the second one where every province elects senators to represent the areas and divisions within this country. We do not only have a division east and west, we have a division north and south. I know there are some people here who feel the Senate should be abolished totally and out of hand, but if you do so as Member and employees of the people of Canada, you will wind up with an elitist, self-destructive system. In simple terms, every aircraft has a copilot; every train has an engineer. We would not consider flying or going anywhere in one of these vehicles without one. Therefore, a Senate must be elected.

My own idea on this is that 15 people from every province which will represent southern, central and northern—maximum 15—may run. Seven will be elected. Then there will be representation. Now this will be slower. There will be conflict, but there also has to be some consultation, and this is fortress consultation. No one region or province, or area, or territory will have political precedence over the financial well-being, the personal well-being, of the nation out of one sector of Canada.

Now I know right away that most people in the upper echelon of politics, business, and in between in a lot of cases, is a wild dream. Well, maybe it is, but if we do not risk something, we will lose it all. Canada will become like the Baltics were before the Second World War with a whole bunch of principalities vying and fighting with each other and including blackmailing each other for dominance in economics in who has got rights, who has not got rights, who has more than others, who should and who should not.

An elected Senate must not extend any more, if for nothing else, economic reasons as well as avoiding hangups within our system. Three will be elected to represent the provinces in the federal Government. The other four will remain in each province. Remember, gentlemen, I said 15 people. Only seven will be elected. Four will remain. They are an even number. The province cannot necessarily use them to their own personal advantage against the people within that province or Canada. However, we will get the representation.

* (1920)

Anything that passes through the House of Commons Parliament—which I might state at this point is very much failing in its name—the common people as of approximately 1960 have not been in that House, as we understand common people, or as I understand common people. Now that does not mean that we need people of all experiences, but we are winding up with only two experiences.

A lot of men and women—not all—but in many cases a majority who have been in a position where they cannot, because of that position, understand or wish to understand, although they give lip service to understanding—it is impossible. I can no more understand somebody that lives on top of the hill and drives a Rolls Royce and makes $500,000 a year than some people can understand why I should work for what I do. There is a block—maybe not intentional—but it is there.

Now in order to avoid this block or create a situation where there is proper discussion for the well-being of this nation, this is the Senate. The senators-to-be shall not accept political funding. They shall not accept funding from corporations or individuals. They must fund themselves through normal financial procedures. Meaning if you have the money, you put it up for your own case. You are in three different parts of one province. You are trying to maintain an election for yourself in a given part of that province. You do not need all the travel expenses, take a bus, meet people in your area.

This way there is no political patronage, corporations cannot push or move an individual that represents not only them but everyone in their particular area. However, if they fail to do so and it is found to do so, they should be called back. Then we have a new election. They have failed to meet and

not be influenced. They are not to be influenced politically or by big business, and this includes every province, including the one we are having a great deal of problems with right now in Canada, partly put on by ourselves because of a lack of understanding. This includes Quebec and includes Prince Edward Island. Same, no difference in numbers, now you have to negotiate.

Fair play, as level a field as is humanly possible and no influence peddling. This country we call Canada is not a piece of ground all of its own; it involves every nation of the world who came under different duress to find a certain freedom and peace. Freedom, I never said liberty. Freedom is responsibility too. Liberty has a connotation of "if I can do it before you do it, I will take what you have, take liberty, I will take liberty from you." Now I do not like that word. Maybe it is because of our neighbour to the south, the screaming eagle. We forget the history of our neighbours; we forget the history of Texas, California, Mexico, Cuba, the Philippines, Roosevelt "carry a big stick and talk softly."

We have resources in this country that are being wasted, people as well as the resources come out of the earth—I guess I am through so—

Mr. Chairman: Five minutes, sir.

Mr. Sumner: —and this we must control ourselves. We must stop being intimidated; we must not be greedy at the same time, but we must not be intimidated, so the man on the street when he pays $3 for a gallon of gas and sees an American corporation, he buys, he produces, and ships it across the southwestern part of Manitoba into Minot, and the man or the lady goes to the filling station and gets it between $1.25 and $1.50. I believe it is $1.50 because Mr. Bush needed that extra quarter for the war.

There is something drastically wrong. What in the world, gentlemen, has the American people got on us? We made agreements, we like to live up to them, but I as a citizen do not wish to be taken to the cleaners, nor do I wish my grandchildren to be taken to the cleaners. We are a patriotic people in this country, but we in general terms do not go walking all over the place worshipping a flag. We care about each other. We do not always say so. We are quiet, northern-style people, but we do have tempers. We do have complaints.

You wanted some answers. This is only one person's small answer. The control under democracy of the administration in forward products of abilities of the people of this country without overregulation, without undue interference. I am not saying that we should not have some, but it should not be to the detriment of the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to partake in his country without going to New York or Japan with our hat in hand for a loan that is never going to be paid.

The economic stress we are in is not the stress of the people per se. It is the lending of our knowledge and giving of our time, of our blue berets, United Nations people, and all this. We must pay for this. Eight and a half million people have to pay, to hold up 26 million in total, of which approximately 42 percent of the resources are owned by 20 percent of the population. I hate to get into that, but it is the truth. It is the—we are becoming strangled because of a debt through borrowing from the people of Canada in which the Government or our administrators have to go to Wall Street, the Swiss banks, France, Germany and Japan in order to pay the interest to the people, which in turn means we have to be taxed back to recover, a no win situation. We cannot keep it up. Fifty-six percent of our money right now comes off the tax roll out of my pocket before anything else.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, sir. Any questions of Mr. Sumner? Yes, Mr. Ashton.

* (1930)

Mr. Ashton: I would like to thank you for your presentation. You have obviously done a lot of thinking over the years about possible changes, as you mentioned, in terms of the political structure, et cetera.

The one question I wanted to ask though perhaps goes a little bit beyond that. We had some interesting presentations from people this afternoon. Many people indicated they really were not used to public speaking and it was the first time they really said anything publicly, although they had obviously given it a lot of thought over the years. There is a real concern about the future of Canada and people wanting to have some ability to influence it, not just be influenced by events controlled by outside forces.

I would just like to ask you in a general sense what your view is in terms of Canada in the next number of years. I do not mean just in a constitutional sense. I do not mean just in a legalistic sense. You have come up with some ideas of your own. Do you see ways in which we can pull this country together over what is obviously going to be a very difficult period of time?

Mr. Sumner: Well, the mechanics that I stated here has to be one of the first things that has to be thought of. Men and women like you have to start listening and doing. Sometimes it is going to be very hard because, as we all know, everybody in politics, one way or the other, whether they realize it or not in many cases, wind up owing debts—to be polite—owing debts, favours. I do not mean in monetary or jobwise. I mean, well, I voted for—you know, we will make an arrangement. That is fine, but sooner or later that note is called. This is what we must try to avoid, this note making business—as even a playing field as possible.

We are Canadians. We are of different ethnic backgrounds. I, in the vernacular of some people, would be called a Heinz 57. I am first and foremost a Canadian.

Manitoba as a province is only as important as the whole. Let us stop being selfish. If we do not—and this is to your point, Mr. Ashton—this country will break. We will become Baltic. We will be going, hat in hands, we will be begging. We will be what is called a 10 percent nation.

Other nations will come in because we will have fallen flat on our economic face and constitutional face. They will say, we will do this and we will give you that. What are we to say—master? That does not only include the "eagle" over here. It also includes the Pacific Rim.

If we want to rectify it we start talking outside this country, quit looking—we have to keep an eye on the South, but we have to look further; otherwise our resources are going to be used. The services that we require will become less and less, because Governments do not make money, banks make money. They control whether we have a depression or recession—from my concern right now it is a depression in most cases. We manipulate the people of this country through our economic system to suit our purposes.

Now, to go totally socialist is not the answer either, because that has proven to be, in some cases, a total failure or a partial success—and very partial. The only other country that we now beat, I believe, and that was a while ago, almost three years ago, was the Scandinavian countries.

If you want to talk about people not being self-motivated, look what happened to the crop in the Soviet Socialist Republic. You have a job, okay, I was told to do that. I loaded the wagon, but nobody told me to take it to market. I do not have a piece of paper. That is what was happening to people here—oh, it is not my responsibility. Why? Organized chaos, nobody is willing to take the risk. I cannot afford to lose my job. It is economic, very sneaky blackmail, and it goes from the littlest person, the mothers, right up through the system—all the way. If I go ask for this, they will cut me off from that, but if I get a job, I do not make enough. You know, these are small items, but in the whole process, it still concerns our Constitution rights.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Sumner.

Mr. Sumner: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Chairman: Good night.

Mr. Sumner: Good evening.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mayer, how are you, sir?

Mr. Bob Mayer (Private Citizen): I whole lot more uncomfortable than when I sat here the last time you sat here. It is a lot more difficult, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the task force. It was a lot easier to deal with the problems posed by Meech Lake than it is to try to answer your mandate today, the views of Manitobans on the future of Canada, its people, its provinces and its regions.

I opened last time by saying I am a Canadian first. It seems necessary to say that again. I see Canada from sea to sea to sea, and as a Canadian, I believe I own a piece of that province that now talks about separation. That is of a great deal of concern to me, to my family, to my friends and to the people on the street who I talk to. I do not really know how to answer your questions, but I do feel compelled to be here, because I think we, as Canadians, have to speak up for Canada.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the task force, I suppose we have to go back to basics when we talk about what is best for Canada. I suppose we have to go back and talk about what has held this country together for this long as opposed to what is tearing it apart now. Surely, it was not the Constitution, which resided in England until 1982. Surely, that is not what held us together. It was not the Charter of Rights, which is relatively new. Although I support the Charter of Rights, it is certainly not something that I would suggest is that which is part of what held Canada together this length of time.

I thought about that for a fair bit of time, trying to go back to first base and say why are we here? Well, we will get away from the United Empire Loyalists and

why we had to fight the Americans, and we will stay away from the Battle of the Plains of Abraham and we will move to a little closer history.

It seems to me that Canada has been held together by a sense of fairness, a sense of well-being, to some extent a sense of we are going to have to stay together to protect ourselves from what may happen if we are taken over by our far larger neighbour to the south.

To some extent it seems to me that Canadians like to be Canadians for the same reason that I like to live in Thompson as opposed to some of you liking to live in Winnipeg. I kind of like the small town atmosphere with all its unfortunate things, that everybody knows your business and everybody knows what you were doing on the weekend, but with its sense of well-being that everybody also cares as to what happened to you if you had a problem, if your family is having a little trouble.

I tend to think that Canadians look at Canada as opposed to our large neighbour to the south, as if we are the small town and the small town mentality and the good things and some of the bad things that come with it, as opposed to the large monster to the south of us that becomes the melting pot as we remain the mosaic.

What keeps us together, what has kept us together over these number of years, I would hope, is what would continue to keep us together despite the perceived problems on the sharing and division of powers in the Constitution and the failure of Meech Lake and a number of other things. I am not sure it is the Constitution, Mr. Chairman. A number of politicians I think would like us to believe that it is the Constitution, but I do not think that is whatever has held us together.

* (1940)

We, as Canadians, over the past number of years and I advance light years forward from the United Empire Loyalists and other comments I made earlier, but we have been held together I think by our communication system, our transportation system, our networks that kept us neighbours, and allowed us to know what our neighbours in Quebec and Newfoundland were doing. When the ship hit the rocks on the Canso Straits, we were all concerned. When the Exxon Valdez released its oil on the shores of Alaska, we were all concerned and we knew about it. We watched as the whales were freed from the ice.

I see that falling apart and not as a constitutional process, but as apparently a deliberate pattern of the Government we have in Canada today. I watch our transportation system being decimated. I remember riding the trains. VIA is what I used to call the CNR when I used to ride the trains when I came out of Transcona. I remember I used to receive my mail twice a day, home delivered. Now some parts of this town will not receive it at all, and good portions of this country will have to go to a "super mail box" to pick it up. I watched the CBC, that public communications network that kept us together being decimated. I see our system of medicare which held us together and which we, as Canadians, feel is part of our security blanket, being destroyed by the lack of transfer payments that are happening. I see the possibility of my children going to university being threatened by the fact that the transfer payments once again are decimating our education system in this province and, I suggest to you, throughout Canada.

I see the problem that has been created by the Free Trade Agreement that tends to drive us more north and south than in the days of Sir John A. Macdonald when he suggested we ought to look east and west. We, as Canadians, have looked east and west. The Free Trade Agreement, I suggest to you, Mr. Chairman, forces us to look north and south. We are consciously destroying ourselves, and it is not necessarily the Constitution that is doing it. It is the conscious actions of Government today that is doing it and that makes me sick.

I do not think there is any quick change, and I do not think there is any quick solution. I read in the newspapers in following your tours that some people seem to think a Triple-A Senate—Triple-E Senate; Triple-A is my word, and I will not mention what the three A's are. I am not prepared to see our system of Government further Americanized. An elected—I forget what the other two are—quite frankly just tells me that we are moving to an American Republican system that has no place in Canada. It drives us merely closer. I ask the question of those who look to the, quote, Triple-E Senate as something that is somehow going to solve our problem constitutionally—the one question I ask is, who will govern? It does not govern well south of the border. It works despite itself, not because of it. Who will govern?

I do not like the present Government we have in Ottawa, and that comes as no secret to some of you at the table, but I accept the right of the people of

Canada to elect a Government. I accept representation according to population. I want some protection for minorities. I do not think the Senate now or any future Senate is the solution to that problem. I think the effect that we, as people, can have upon the politicians can be more effective than the creation of another body, and a competing body, to attempt to govern this country. This country will not govern easily. It never has and never will.

I prefer the system we have to the one that is being proposed. I reject out of hand the idea of electing a second governing House because if we go to an elected Senate—at least up until now, while they have been throwing shoes at each other and playing their harmonicas in the Senate Chamber opposing the GST and the circus that went on there, at least it was possible for someone to say they are just appointed. We can probably ignore them and we can walk over them if necessary.

The Government has the right to tax. I oppose the GST as much as anyone, but the Government has the right to tax. Watching that facade that went on in Ottawa as an unelected body sought to stall the governance of this country was something that I did not find acceptable. I would find it less acceptable. I think we would find the governance of this country stalled completely if we had two Houses that were elected, and I certainly cannot accept that.

Mr. Chairman, just in summary, I think, I hope this task force will, rather than looking specifically at the Constitution and the problems that arise out of various interests groups that are involved and people who are entitled to recognition—and I do not intend to speak for the Native people. I see that they are represented behind me tonight, and they have a legitimate claim to recognition, every bit as much and in fact more so than many of the other groups who undoubtedly will come before you, I do not seek to make their case for them.

I think if we could go back to the basics and talk about the fairness that this country has always offered to its citizens, the sense of well-being that we as Canadians have felt, not so much recently but not all that long ago, and go back to try to determine why we felt that way and why most Canadians did not really have a problem with the Constitution until all of a sudden somebody tried to fix it, we start looking at those things that kept us together. Maybe we can go talk to our brothers and sisters in Quebec. Maybe we can talk to our brothers and sisters in the Native community, and maybe, just maybe, we can keep this country together. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, sir. Questions? Mr. Ashton?

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I would like to ask Mr. Mayer—I know his strong feelings in regard to Meech Lake. I do not want to go through the Meech Lake debate again, and I know he was very forceful in his views and expressed them before a similar task force not that long ago really, but what I want to ask is sort of looking ahead. You have identified some things you definitely feel are not the solution, the Triple-E Senate being one in particular, but if you could look ahead to the next two or three years, which by all accounts is going to be a very tough time period. We have the Quebec report talk of another referendum in 1992, the provinces developing their own positions, our province being one of them. What do you see as being the road ahead? What would you suggest in terms of getting us out of this difficult situation?

Mr. Mayer: If I had that answer, Steve, I would be sitting there rather than you. I cannot answer that question. All I can tell you is what I hear where I live, and that is what I said earlier. There are a lot of things that kept us together and a lot of things that we ought to be looking to, to keep us together again. In this town, one person said to me today, he says, you know, we are Canadians, the land all along the north end of the St. Lawrence River is Canada and it is a piece of mine, and I am not going to let it go.

I will not say the rest of what he said because that would not be useful, but I do think that if we are going to talk about keeping this country together, the only thing I can suggest is that we go back to basics. Fairness always works with everyone as long as we understand it, and if we can get a common conception of fairness. Fairness and well-being have kept this country together this long; I think that is where we have to be looking, and what may be fair to Quebec or to any other group in this country.

* (1950)

We may have a difference but as long as we are talking about the question of fairness and the question of well-being, I think we can keep talking. As soon as we start talking about our rights as opposed to their rights, my rights as opposed to your rights, we are going to run into a problem. And when one conceives of something as being one's right, it ceases to be negotiable. I wish I could answer your question, Steve.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions? Mr. Hickes?

Mr. Hickes: I would ask you about when you were talking about a united Canada, and to keep Canada united, were you referring to some of our programs that we have? You mentioned briefly about the medicare program. Were you also talking about the educational needs and aspirations and the fairness to access to education for our children and people across Canada?

Mr. Mayer: Yes.

Mr. Hickes: Maybe if you could elaborate a bit on certain areas that you were mentioning.

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Hickes, I have the brochure and I have made a couple of notes where it says, current division of powers between the federal and provincial Government, how would you change it. Well, your question brings me to that point.

I would change the present division of powers by making both education and health and social programs a joint responsibility of the federal and provincial Government so that people across Canada could be guaranteed the high standards which we have come to expect and not to have to rely on—forgive me for getting a little legalistic—the federal Government's spending power in order to ensure the national standards of our medical care programs, of our education programs, of our social service programs and hopefully down the road, of our child care programs, and I suppose, because I see one other person behind me, of our environmental protection programs.

I guess I range against the common flow right now which wants to put more power in the provinces. Not me quite frankly—I would like to ensure standards across this country.

Medicare is one we have all come to accept. I am old enough to remember when we did not have it. I remember when you had to think about it before you could go to a hospital if you got hurt. You were hurt on a ski hill out here, and you had to think about whether you had enough money to go there and pay the fees. That is part of our well-being now, and that is something that has to be preserved. That is something that I see being eaten away day after day after day, and it is not necessarily our Constitution. It is the policies of the Government in power.

If we are going to talk about the Constitution, there is no problem with making health care and education a joint shared power. We do it with the criminal law which is something that I know reasonably well. Criminal law is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal Government, but the administration of justice is the exclusive jurisdiction of the province which in the end result creates a shared power in the whole question of criminal law and justice. I see no reason we cannot do that with education, health care and a number of other areas where all Canadians are entitled to the same standard.

Mrs. Render: Mr. Mayer, one of the reasons why people promote the concept of the Triple-E Senate is so that the less populous regions or provinces would be more fairly represented. If the Senate is abolished, how do you propose or what do you suggest can take the place of presumably a Senate, each province being equal? How do you see the provinces being more fairly represented?

Mr. Mayer: The provinces have been done quite well protecting themselves, thank you very much. The federal-provincial conferences virtually replaced any other method of dealing with constitutional change, for example. We do not need a Senate. Quite frankly, as much as I find him distasteful, Bill Vander Zalm does not seem to have any trouble letting you know what British Columbia wants, needs and if you do not like it, he is going to create a problem for you in his area where he has some power to do it.

I do not think it is necessary to add another elected body to the federal bureaucracy and to the federal political specter that quite frankly can create nothing more than more division. If we are now going to divide regions in addition to dividing provinces as we do now and linguistic minorities and visual minorities, you want to add into that a regional diversity that carries the same kind of power as the House of Commons, the representation according to population, which is democracy as I understand it. You want to add something on top of that. I do not see how that is going to help.

Mrs. Render: Do you think Manitoba has been fairly treated, say, in the past six years? Do you think Manitoba's voice is as strong as, say, Ontario's and Quebec's?

Mr. Mayer: Those are two different questions. The answer to your second question is, no. The answer to your first question is a qualified maybe. We got hosed on what some people choose to call the CF-18, and that was a strictly political problem and, in my opinion, an aberration—an aberration that resulted from the fact that we made a mistake in 1984, and we made a mistake in 1988. I have enough confidence

in Manitobans that we will not make that mistake again, and I am not prepared to add another layer of Government to make sure that it does not happen again. I can reverse both of those problems.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mayer, any interest at all—and there has been a fair amount of interest expressed in what is sometimes described as the leftovers of direct democracy. You clearly are interested in the abolition of the Senate, although you have not said so as such. I presume that you would not want to retain the present appointed body. So, therefore, I assume you are for abolition. Any interest at all in referendum and proportional representation in federal elections for the House of Commons, even possibly—although I suspect your healthy suspicion of American institutions might draw the line at recall—any interests at all in any of those mechanisms for greater public participation at intervals between elections?

Mr. Mayer: A healthy concern for the American system creates the same problem for referendums as it does for recall, and it is not because I do not trust the public. It is, I do not trust who manipulates the public, and referenda have that small problem of, you are unable unless you can afford it, to present your case to the public reasonably well too often, depending upon when referenda were held and over what period of time and what the ground rules were for funding.

I think we had a referendum on free trade. I do not like the results very much, and I am not entirely convinced that the electorate was not purchased. I have those concerns about referenda. I am not as hard and fast insofar as proportional representation or building in a proportional representation factor into the House of Commons. I have to admit that I have not given it enough thought to be able to give you a reasonable proposal as to how it would be built in, but I have a lot more use for building proportional representation into the one elected body that governs this country than I do to setting up a totally separate body with a different perspective and a different mandate.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks very much, sir.

Our next presenter is the MKO and, Chief, you will forgive me, I will not get the pronunciation right if I try the longer version, so I will leave it at MKO. Chief Robert Wavey is speaking on behalf of the assembly.

* (2000)

Mr. Robert Wavey (Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, Inc.): Thank you and good evening.

Mr. Chairman: Good evening, Chief.

Mr. Wavey: I suppose I am the third Robert in a row here.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Wavey: It must be a night for Roberts or something.

The MKO, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak interpreted basically means Northern Manitoba Chiefs. The MKO represents 23 bands in northern Manitoba with a total population of some 27,000, and I am here as the chairman of that organization. I have a written text, I will just read it and see if I can do it within 20 minutes.

Aboriginal peoples are among Canada's constitutional experts. We have been engaged in bilateral negotiations with Governments long before Confederation of the Canada we know today. We have dealt with the concept of rights since time immemorial in our laws and traditions, and for more than 200 years in the language of our treaties and pressing land claims. The Canadian people have recognized that aboriginal peoples do not play politics with rights, but work hard to defend, protect and promote aboriginal and treaty rights. We will share with you our expertise.

In many ways, the circumstances surrounding the deliberations of this second Manitoba Constitutional Task Force are very different than for the preceding task force in early 1989. During the summer of 1990, we have witnessed many successes and gains which strengthen the cause and support the struggle of our aboriginal peoples in Canada.

First was the aboriginal victory over the Meech Lake Accord, which gave aboriginal people a heightened sense of national political empowerment. Next was the tremendous national and international unity and the recognition by aboriginal peoples that, together, we can no longer be ignored.

Largely as a result of the standoffs in Oka and Kahnawake and across Canada by aboriginal peoples pressing land claims, Canadians better recognize the true costs of Canada's unacceptable policies toward aboriginal peoples, and are coming to terms with the failure of successive Governments to adequately recognize and respect aboriginal rights or to fulfill the terms of treaties. At last, Canadians have come to recognize and support the long struggle of aboriginal peoples for constitutional justice. Aboriginal peoples and the leadership of First Nations have redoubled the effort to make Canada live up to

its many outstanding obligations to aboriginal peoples, and implement many key changes to the Constitution of Canada.

The use and occupation of the land, which is now Canada, by aboriginal peoples at the time of European contact forms an important basis for the relationship of aboriginal peoples with what is now the Government of Canada. The independent and sovereign nature of aboriginal law, justice and governing systems remains within aboriginal peoples, and has yet to be entrenched in the Constitution of Canada.

The Constitution of Canada was created in 1867 without input from First Nations, without recognizing the existing Governments of First Nations or the rights of aboriginal peoples. Prior to 1982, aboriginal rights and issues such as self-government were examined by Government and courts as largely academic matters on which wide differences in opinion and interpretation occurred.

In 1982, existing aboriginal and treaty rights were recognized and affirmed in Section 35(1) of the Canadian Constitution after considerable pressure from aboriginal people and sympathetic First Ministers. Treaties are now constitutional documents under Section 35.

There was considerable debate and an inability to agree on the identification and definition of specific aboriginal rights to be included in the Constitution. As a result, Section 37 also provided for a First Ministers' Conference to examine constitutional matters that directly affect the aboriginal people.

Between 1983 and 1987, four constitutional conferences were held which dealt with aboriginal self-government. All four conferences ended without any constitutional amendments respecting additional definition of aboriginal rights or entrenchments of aboriginal self-government.

Amendments to the Constitution, however, continue to be made and proposed without the equal participation of First Nations. The Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force included the following finding concerning aboriginal peoples in its October 1989 report: "As the original peoples, aboriginal peoples should be recognized and given priority."

Federal Government views of constitutional priorities are very different from those of the Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force or aboriginal peoples.

A committee of the House of Commons, chaired by Charest, considered a companion resolution to the Meech Lake Accord. The committee also considered the reservations of Manitoba and Newfoundland about the language of the Meech Lake Accord, including the Manitoba Task Force recommendations. In the May 1990 Report of the Special Committee to Study the Proposed Companion Resolution to the Meech Lake Accord, the committee recommended under Section 23: Your committee recommends that Senate reform should be a priority item for the constitutional round.

On September 25, 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney sought to comfort those Canadians and Members of Parliament sympathetic to the Mohawks and other First Nations through a "major" post-Meech Lake policy statement on aboriginal affairs known as the "Four Pillars" speech.

The Prime Minister explicitly stated that any constitutional changes affecting aboriginal concerns must be further delayed until issues concerning Quebec are resolved. The Prime Minister also predetermined that aboriginal self-government must be within the Constitution and "the present concept of Confederation" and ruled out the creation of sovereign First Nations.

Justice demands that the priority for further constitutional discussion and amendment must be the concerns and recommendations of aboriginal peoples.

Before the Europeans journeyed to this sacred land called Canada, our people were proud and self-reliant with a highly sophisticated civilization.

In northern Manitoba, aboriginal peoples have been in contact with Europeans for some 350 years. Canada's first industry, the fur trade, was carried out in the beginning by aboriginal peoples from the MKO region.

During the 250 years, between first contact with the Hudson's Bay Company and the signing of Treaties in 1910, northern Manitoba First Nations were sovereign, independent and carried out all the functions of Government.

Although the treaties did not take away the right to pursue self-determination and ensure for the future well-being of our people, Canada has sought to impose non-aboriginal Government structures through the Indian Act.

Before the European invasion, our societies were governed according to tribal and clan organization. The basic unit was the clan, a kinship group claiming a common ancestor. Members of the clan were bound

by strong bonds of solidarity and mutual assistance. Each clan had its own council, a democratic governing body composed of both men and women that selected and dismissed leaders.

Each tribe had its own dialect or language, its own spiritual beliefs, rites of worship and specific spiritual festivals during which dancing played an important part. The common land of each tribe was usually respected by neighbouring tribes.

The council set policies with regard to the economic affairs of the tribe and established working relationships with neighbouring tribes.

The aboriginal people of northern Manitoba have never relented in our efforts to defend and protect our languages, our culture, and our institutions.

The Manitoba Meech Lake Task Force also recommended an amended Canada clause under Section 2.(1), and it reads in part: The Constitution of Canada shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the recognition that the following constitute fundamental characteristics of Canada.

Under Section (b), it went on to say: the existence of the aboriginal peoples as a distinct and fundamental part of Canada.

The Charest Committee also recommended under Section 18: With respect to the recognition of aboriginal peoples and of our multicultural heritage, we encourage the First Ministers to respond to these fundamental elements of Canada by recognizing them in the body of the Constitution.

Aboriginal peoples must be recognized in the Constitution of Canada as the First Nations. This recognition must entrench aboriginal societies as distinct societies and provide constitutional protection for aboriginal languages, culture, traditions and institutions.

Just as there are federal and provincial jurisdictions, there can be a third independent order of Government for the First Nations with unique jurisdiction and constitutional provisions. To work out the future shape of this third order of Government requires that Canada and the provinces listen to what we say, act in good faith and negotiate from the principle that we are nations. Governments must not continue to place every conceivable obstacle in our path.

[4] (2010)

Canada can promote self-government through a bilateral process which is not dependent on the wishes of the provinces. The demise of the Meech Lake Accord should not in any way delay the full development of self-government.

First Nations in northern Manitoba are building working relationships with First Nations Canada-wide and advance the perception of aboriginal organizations beyond political lobby groups to aboriginal Governments. We will become aboriginal Government. We will again govern our people and our homelands.

Self-government does not need to await the outcome of negotiations between aboriginal people and the federal Government and the provinces. Self-government exists within the development of First Nations' law, based on the traditions and culture of our people. Self-government exists within the hearts of our people.

The Constitution of Canada must be amended to explicitly recognize and protect the right of self-government and recognize First Nations' Governments as a third order of Government.

The land is the basis of our culture and the centre of our existence. Our concept of land is holistic. Our people showed respect because of the spiritual nutrition that was received from Mother Earth. The land was not to be exploited, but rather was given by the great spirit to be used not only by man, but also by all living creatures.

Since time immemorial First Nations were able to use and benefit from the resources and lands within our traditional territories. Aboriginal people were able to exert whatever influence and control was required to manage and regulate the use of resources to ensure for the future of our people. The land and the people are one.

To First Nations, there is not now, and there never was any frontiers, wilderness or empty lands. The forests, tundra and Arctic regions of Canada have always been, and remain today, the First Nations' homeland. Northern Manitoba First Nations do not agree that their role in managing treaty resources has been surrendered.

Land was not a commodity of trade in our society. Clans and tribes appropriated certain land as their hunting and camping territory; however, there was no strict delineation of boundaries, and they changed as the needs of the tribe changed.

The successors were also believed to have rights in the land. Therefore, the members had an obligation to leave it for their children in the condition in which

they had inherited it themselves. Individual ownership of land was unknown, as were such concepts as selling, leasing, or mortgaging land. The concept of aboriginal title has come to partly represent the rights to continued stewardship, use and benefit of lands and resources.

Government does not view constitutionally entrenched aboriginal and treaty rights as requiring protection of the land, resources and environment, or our consent for development.

It was never intended by the treaty chiefs who went before us that our aboriginal rights to continue the undisturbed use of resources would only apply to an increasingly smaller corner of our traditional lands not affected by mining, forestry, hydro electric development or pressure from non-aboriginal resource users. First Nations are working to ensure that should our rights be affected and the benefits from these rights reduced, that this is only done with our direct involvement and consent.

The difference between poverty and prosperity in our communities will be determined by the extent to which First Nations control, regulate and manage the lands and resources within our traditional territories. Prosperity in the eyes of the aboriginal peoples includes the health of our people, lands and the environment, as well as the economic measurement usually applied by non-aboriginal peoples.

The Constitution of Canada must be amended to explicitly recognize that our aboriginal and treaty rights are linked to, and include, the right to the continued stewardship, protection, use and benefits of lands and resources. This amendment must also include recognition and protection for aboriginal title.

During the past year, Canada failed in its duty to aboriginal peoples, and to all Canadians, in two high-profile constitutional issues: first was by refusing to include the interests of aboriginal peoples in the constitutional proposals related to the Meech Lake Accord; and No. 2, by not recalling Parliament during the crisis in Oka and Kahnawake to enable the full use of federal powers and authority to reach an honourable, negotiated settlement.

It is clear to Canadians that the federal and provincial Governments, by refusing to recognize the interests and rights of the Mohawk people for more than 125 years, precipitated the long confrontation this summer.

As stated earlier, on September 25, 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney sought to comfort those Canadians and Members of Parliament sympathetic to the Mohawks and other First Nations through a major post-Meech Lake policy statement on aboriginal affairs known as the four pillars speech.

Pardon me?

Mr. Chairman: You have five more minutes.

Mr. Wavey: Okay, thank you. The central theme of the Prime Minister's speech was that his Government would make the early resolution of aboriginal claims and other issues a national priority.

The Prime Minister described the four pillars of his agenda as: No. 1, resolution of land claims; No. 2, improving economic and social conditions on reserves; No. 3, a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and Governments; and No. 4, incorporating the concerns of aboriginal peoples in everyday Canadian life.

The statements will only comfort those who are not familiar with the actual conditions of life in our communities, and the nature of federal policies imposed upon aboriginal peoples. The Prime Minister also stated that Canada's "agenda would be anchored in reality." Translated, this means a continuation of the status quo, that we could expect more of the same, only a lot more of it.

This is not acceptable. The Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs are the foundation of the problem, and the foundation is rotten. In order for the four pillars to stand, and for a new agenda to take hold, new foundations need to be laid. We must go beyond the status quo and develop a new constitutional relationship between aboriginal peoples in Canada. The Indian Act must be extensively revised with the direct participation and involvement of aboriginal peoples, and the most intrusive features repealed. The Department of Indian Affairs must be dismantled in accordance with a restructured Indian Act and constitutional provisions entrenching self-government.

The reference by the Prime Minister to the wrongs of the past and also to the new relationship should be viewed carefully. Canadians must understand that there is already a constitutionally entrenched relationship based in fiduciary, treaty and other obligations on the part of Canada, and which is reinforced by case law. This relationship remains unfulfilled.

To honour, implement and fulfill the meaning and intent of treaties, trust responsibilities and case law would be, in itself, a new relationship. Any effort by

Canada to develop a new agenda must be based on recognition and implementation of this considerable existing relationship.

It is impossible to resolve aboriginal issues within the present legal framework and within the confines of national party politics and partisan agendas. The constitutional relationship is between aboriginal peoples and the Crown, in the right of Canada, not between aboriginal peoples and the Minister of Indian Affairs.

There needs to be a working framework established with direct contact and accountability at the Cabinet level. Canada must not give more money and authority to the same Indian Affairs bureaucrats who have been the architects of the present failed policies. An independent agency must be created and empowered to protect and fulfill Canada's constitutional relationship with aboriginal peoples, with full powers to take whatever action is necessary to ensure compliance by either the federal or provincial Governments.

Canada must establish an independent aboriginal advocate reporting to the House of Commons to fulfill the spirit and intent of Canada's constitutional obligations respecting aboriginal and treaty rights.

It is a fundamental effect of our Meech Lake victory that relations between First Nations and other Governments will never be as they were. Recent events in Mohawk territory confirm that the Government should never attempt to return to the ways of the past. The long struggle of First Nations for the recognition of aboriginal rights and fulfillment of treaty rights has significantly changed in favour of aboriginal people with several recent court decisions which strengthen and confirm the meaning of Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

The Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Sioui case has finally established the crucial principle that the Governments of Canada and the provinces may not alter or diminish treaty provisions or rights by independent legislative action.

* (2020)

The Sioui decision further confirmed that the treaties are "sacred documents" binding Canada and First Nations, and that only the parties to the agreement may together interpret the meaning and the extent of rights confirmed under the treaty.

In the Sparrow decision, it establishes that Canada and the provinces have limited power to regulate and control the exercise of aboriginal rights. Sparrow also provides a mechanism by which existing regulations of both Canada and the provinces may be examined and tested to determine whether these regulations are excessive and unreasonably restrict or constrain the enjoyment of aboriginal rights.

These two recent court decisions will strengthen considerably the hand of the aboriginal people in our efforts to exercise and benefit from our rights, reassert our jurisdiction over our traditional lands and the resources within them and establish our Governments and institutions—

Mr. Chairman: You are so close to the end, so you might as well just finish off if you will.

Mr. Wavey: Negotiations and discussions between First Nations and Government must now shift to examinations of how existing federal and provincial policy and laws must be amended, and new policies developed, which are consistent with the findings in these court decisions.

A bilateral process must be immediately established to examine provincial and federal policy and legislation to ensure these laws are compatible with aboriginal and treaty rights as entrenched in the Constitution and as interpreted by the courts.

Maybe I will leave it there and just read the last sentence.

The Constitution of Canada must be amended to entrench the right of aboriginal peoples to participate in constitutional development as equals.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, sir. Questions?

Mr. Carr: Chief, I am going to do the unexpected here. That is as clear a statement as I have read on the aspirations of aboriginals, but I want to ask you a question about something else, and to give us the benefit of your insight and wisdom, to guide us as we approach the negotiation for a new Canada. We now know what the aspirations of the people of Quebec are, at least as expressed by their Government, and we have a very clear statement of the aspirations of aboriginal people. English Canada is struggling to formulate and define its own aspirations, but I would like for you to advise Members of this task force how we ought to approach that negotiation in order to try to make the country whole again.

Mr. Wavey: As the previous Bob said, if I knew that, I would be sitting up there too I suppose.

Mr. Carr: Well, and as I said to a presenter this afternoon, we are no better than anybody else.

Mr. Wavey: Well, I suppose that when you look at the whole global picture throughout the country, it has always been my belief that when the contact was first made with the Europeans coming into this country, I have always believed that it would be the aboriginal people who would be able to reunite this country, particularly in the last few years.

I think basically what everybody has got away from is the principles involved in doing what we do. I guess in our instance Meech Lake was as good an example as any. What we did in Meech Lake was strictly out of principle and not for any other reason, for no gain.

To me, I think one of the things I dislike most about the parliamentary system that we have in Canada is basically that it is parliamentary democracy and not really democracy of the people. The first speaker mentioned something to that effect, that the partisan politics I think get in the way of governing the country. I think there is a need to really look at the system as it is. I am not necessarily saying that we have to look at other models but to look at the whole system as it is in Canada and to really question the need for partisan politics. I mean, if we are all in it for the good of the country, then why do we have three—basically now at the national level—different visions of Canada? Surely to goodness those three Parties can come together and come up with something that is for the common benefit of all Canadians.

Mr. Carr: When you look at the statements made by the Government of Quebec, and the demands that it makes for a more decentralized Canada, transfer of powers, more self-determination, sovereignty, for lack of a better word, do you see that in the same light that you see the demand for sovereignty among aboriginal peoples, or do you see it as a different kind of a sovereignty and ought it to be treated the same way through your eyes?

Mr. Wavey: No, I think they are basically one and the same. The basic difference between the people of Quebec and aboriginal peoples is that Quebec already has a land base in our province. So to them demanding sovereignty is a lot easier than it is for aboriginal people to do that. They also have the numbers, but I look at it and I view it as one and the same.

Mr. Carr: Sorry, I missed your last comment.

Mr. Wavey: What they are attempting to do is no different than what we want to do, only, I think, basically that the major difference might be in terms of how they see their relationship with the rest of Canada. For ourselves, I think we have looked at sovereignty more from the sense of co-existence as opposed to two separate peoples not working together.

Mr. Ashton: A very interesting presentation—what I found interesting too is as the clock was ticking and the extension was granted by the committee, it reminded me of the difference in time, or perceptions of time, and discussion I have been involved with, Elijah Harper, Phil Fontaine, and a number of us around the time of the last two weeks in Meech Lake and the point was raised as to whether there might be some gains for aboriginal people, however unsatisfactory in Meech Lake, and how constitutional discussions might be set back for a decade or perhaps even for decades to come. It reminded me of something Elijah had said at the time. He said after several hundred years aboriginal people could wait a decade or more for fairness and for a whole Constitution, for self-government.

I want to ask you, it is several months since, and as you said there has been some remarkable events, certainly last year, 1990, whether it be in terms of Meech Lake, whether it be in terms of Oka, whether it be in terms of some of the court cases, which have really made some major decisions affecting the recognition of self-government and treaty rights. I want to ask you, looking at that time frame—because Meech Lake we had a deadline, it looks like again certainly in the case of Quebec, they are trying to put a deadline 1992—how did you react in terms of aboriginal people, the people that you represent, to the timing, the deadlines, and the process that we seem to be facing right now?

Mr. Wavey: I think basically that most deadlines are artificial to one degree or another, so that if we have a 1992 deadline to meet then we will probably try and meet it as aboriginal people in order to further our own agenda, yet this does not necessarily mean that will be the final deadline. If the deadline is there, certainly we will try and work toward it. I do not think that will necessarily mean that when the deadline is there that if we have not gotten what we wanted that we will accept whatever is offered.

I think Elijah put it best when he said that we have waited over 100 years, we can wait another 100. It is I guess accomplishing what you set out to do, not accomplishing as much as you can within a given time frame.

Mr. Ashton: One other question I had—and one of the other things I found quite remarkable during those last couple of weeks in the Meech Lake was being in the Legislature, seeing the phone calls that were coming in and seeing the support Elijah received in terms of aboriginal people, but seeing some of the messages and talking to people on the phone, from people who said they—I remember one person. He was a British gentleman who said, when he came to Canada he was warned about Native people. He did not quite explain what that was, but he said it really struck him that here—his view was being expressed by Elijah Harper, and he basically said to me that he felt like he had really been unfair to Native people for listening and following through on that approach.

I am wondering if you are seeing any impact of that since Meech Lake, in terms of a better understanding of the aboriginal concerns.

* (2030)

Mr. Wavey: Yes, simply put. I believe some, and there has been a lot of significant changes I think in people's perceptions of who we are and I think a better understanding of our issues. For ourselves as well, we have managed, I think we have learned to be a bit more open and try and educate the public at large about our issues.

Mrs. Render: I can certainly understand the concerns for recognizing self-government. In a sense you have answered my question through your response to Mr. Carr. In just looking over your brief I am still confused exactly what self-government means. I see you have said a third independent order of government with unique jurisdiction. Then a little further down you say a third order of government.

I had always thought that the third order—federal, provincial, municipal, so I am not too sure what you mean by third order. Perhaps you could explain that and also explain how you would see it implemented into the system.

Mr. Wavey: Okay. Basically, in terms, I suppose if you want to look at it—I wish I could do it visually—but in terms of the municipalities they are empowered through the provinces similarly that Indian bands are empowered through the federal Government. There has to be another order of Government that probably has powers equal to the provinces, as predetermined by those treaties. The very fact that the federal Government signed the treaties recognized that those other people had certain rights, as a people. As a people you are a nation, therefore there has to be another order of government that probably has more power than municipalities and at least something to the order of provincial powers.

With respect to the definition, I do not think we see ourselves wanting to be caught in a trap of defining something that only another government can change—the 7-50 sort of thing. Like if you were to define self-government and entrench it into the Constitution then you have limited our ability for that Government to grow and change without going back to the First Ministers, who again now have the authority or the power to predetermine what self-government is. I do not think that is our intent.

We need the room to let it grow and to build it as it goes along.

Mrs. Render: Thank you.

Mr. Downey: Just a brief comment and question, Chief. It is a fairly substantive brief and well put together. Just in reference on page 8 to the Indian Act: "must be extensively revised with the direct participation and involvement of aboriginal peoples and the most intrusive features repealed."

Then your next statement: "The Department of Indian Affairs must be dismantled in accordance with a restructured Indian Act and constitutional provisions."

To me, in the last two and a half years, it seems to have been the—Is it the Act itself or is it the administration of the Act by the bureaucracy that is the biggest frustration?

Mr. Wavey: I think it is the Act itself. I mean the administrators only enforce the divisions of the Act, but when we talk about the intrusive features, I mean, I think it is the—for me personally—powers and authority that somebody else is giving the bands to determine what they can do on their own reservation.

There is a section in the Indian Act, and I will just use this as one example. The powers of council granted by the governor in council, or whatever the department terminologies are, but the very fact that it somewhat defines what the powers of a council are in itself determines what the council is allowed and how it is allowed to govern itself, under what terms and conditions. So it is those features that have to be repealed. I think the Indian Act in itself became more than a guide for the department to administer or to deal with Indians as it were. It also began to determine what Indians could do for themselves.

Mr. Hickes: I see we are running out of time, so I will be very brief. I had a few questions, but I will roll them all into one. The first one was the definition of self-government, and if I heard you correctly, this is the way I interpreted you saying—maybe you could clarify that for me. I heard you say that the way you are identifying self-government is, let us sit down and we will identify that. Yes, we will recognize self-government, but let us sit down and negotiate what will be in the definition and the package of self-government.

Also on that same note, when you identify and settle down to negotiate self-government, what have you as the aboriginal people and the leaders? Have they sort of set a deadline to look at outstanding land claims and when they will be settled?

Also, the resources and stuff that are taken from the North, are there going to be any negotiations for cost-shared revenues and stuff for aboriginal people, so that way revenues will continue for long-term use for aboriginal peoples?

Mr. Wavey: I think that is the full intent of trying to entrench. It is the concept of self-government that I would like to see entrenched, not the definition. The definition in itself becomes restrictive, but not the concept, because the concept has to be developed by the aboriginal people themselves.

Naturally, when you are looking at entrenching the concept of self-government, then you need to also negotiate some transfer agreement, not under the old system of transferring the money to Indian Affairs and then having it filter down, but a direct negotiation of any transfer agreement. It is not so much the definition that I am looking for, and I think that is something that aboriginal people will define for themselves, but it is the concept that we want to entrench.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Member for St. Norbert): I think basically between the three other speakers it has been answered. Am I correct in saying then that you are looking for the entrenchment of your self-government into the Constitution under the division of powers basically equal to the provinces within the country on your own lands?

Mr. Wavey: That is something that is open for discussion. I mean, that is where we are starting. We may not end up there, but that is something that we are striving for. I think I would be a little bit careful in saying, in our own lands, because what are we talking about when we define, in our own lands? That is this whole notion of entrenching the concept of self-government, negotiating resource transfer or transfer payments, which may include resources and additional jurisdiction over additional areas of our traditional lands.

Mr. Laurendeau: That is right. That is very well done, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Chief.

Mr. Wavey: Thank you.

* (2040)

Mr. Chairman: We are going to take just a short break, about five, six minutes, and when we come back we will hear Rod Bruinooge. Forgive me if I have not pronounced that name correctly.

* * *

The hearing took recess at 8:40 p.m.

After Recess

The hearing resumed at 8:52 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back. Our next presenter is Mr. Rod Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Private Citizen): Okay, thank you for allowing me to present tonight.

Mr. Chairman: Good to see you. Welcome.

Mr. Bruinooge: Thanks. My views that I am going to be presenting tonight are a little bit different to the last two presenters—or three, make that. I am going toward a national view on the Constitution and how it can be changed in certain areas. The first couple of points I am going to be making will seem rather trivial, but nonetheless, I thought they looked a tad important. Then I will go in on the order which you have listed on: What are your views on?

You open with overall constitutional priorities for Manitoba which are in the best interests of the province and the unity of Canada. I basically was not exactly thinking of Manitoba in particular, but I was looking through my handy dandy copy of the Constitution. There are a couple of things that I think could be added to the Constitution in general. In particular, Part I, Section 4.(2) is dealing with—I will read it out to you: In time of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection, a House of Commons may be continued by Parliament and legislative assembly. This may be continued beyond five years if such a continuation is not opposed by votes of more than

one-third of the Members of the House of Commons or the Legislative Assembly, as the case may be.

I thought that was all well and good, that point, but also I thought there should be added or entrenched in the Constitution that the Government has the right to impose certain laws and restrictions as it sees fit to deal with the war effort, and how they see that issue be done for certain issues like security and other parts of that. I am not saying a barbaric war measures Act, or anything like that, but certain things that the Government can do to have a little more control on what is going on. I think that should be entrenched in the Constitution, that the Government should have a little more power when it comes to war. That is just one point that I want to deal with there.

Another rather trivial point compared to the other two speakers, Part I, Section 8, dealing with unlawful seizure, it says, "Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure." I thought that the Narcotics Act should be entrenched in this part of the Constitution as well. I believe that the war on drugs is very important in Canada's future and its role as uplifting certain laws. The Narcotics Act, as it states that they can search you if they believe that you do have possession of narcotics, I think that should be entrenched in our Constitution as well. It is very important. One of the main issues of youth today is being drug-free, and that is something that I believe the youth of Canada really strongly believe in. If it was entrenched in our Constitution that we truly believe that, I think that would be quite impressive.

Going on to the Charter as your second point here: the Charter of Rights aboriginal and women's rights in recognition of Canada's multicultural heritage. This is a point I have thought about, and I am not really going to get into aboriginal and women's rights, but certain multicultural points. I believe in multiculturalism totally, although I do believe in some points of the melting pot as well, that the Americans imposed.

Multiculturalism is a beautiful thing, which Canada is known for throughout the world. It is very impressive, and I believe in it totally. I do not want to be seen as racist or anything, but there are certain things that I have seen in the last year and couple of years, in particular, that I believe are going beyond certain aspects of multiculturalism. Just referring to the Charter again, in Part I, Section 26 it states that "the guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed as denying the existence of any other rights or freedoms that exist in Canada."

The point I am trying to make by this part of the Charter, and what I am saying here, is certain aspects of religion, in particular, should not go over a person's rights and impose on certain national symbols. I do not want to be seen as a person with racist attitudes, not at all, but I believe when the female Mountie did not like her garb—she had the hat and little skirt—they motioned to change it, and I believe now that the Mounties will have one outfit for both male and female. I think that outfit is the way Canada should be seen. The symbol of the Mountie is something Canada has had for many years. It is something known throughout the world, and I do not believe that it should be changed for any religion or any other social or cultural aspects. I think I am not going to really go further with that at all, but basically that is what I believe on that point.

Going on with the Charter, Part V, Section 41. This is dealing with the amending formula—and that is also going on with the parts in your points here—and its amending process for constitutional change. Section 41 of Part V is the one I believe which is causing Canada all the problems of constitutional change. That is the one which states, an amendment to Constitution of Canada in relation to the following matters may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor-General under the gratis of Canada when authorized by resolutions, the Senate, House of Commons and of the Legislature of Assembly of each province.

It is good in theory, I believe, but as we have seen in Meech Lake, it is rather impossible. I do not like the idea of how one small province can just stop constitutional changes, and I do not believe that is a good way of democracy. I think it has its good points, but in these last little constitutional problems we have been seeing, in Meech Lake in particular, it has shown that it has really stumped us.

We have had a problem with dealing with the Constitution when you have to have complete and utter support of all the provinces. In certain things I think it is good, but I think that if we had more power, like say, seven provinces or 65 percent, something like that—I am not exactly stating how it should be done, but I think if there was more power to the Government and to the legislative bodies to make the constitutional changes, maybe things would go a lot easier, better, and maybe we would not be in the mess that we are in now. Those are just statements

from a young mind, and I am sure they are not really of too much importance in this whole problem, but they are just some ideas.

* (2100)

Dealing with separation now on Quebec, they stated through the media, and through other sources, that it seems to be coming more of an issue in Quebec to in fact separate. I do not want to see that at all. I have actually been in Quebec. I sat at the table where they decided on Meech Lake back in '87. I was at Meech Lake. It is a beautiful place, and I like Quebec. It is a beautiful province, and I do not want to lose that province at all, being a Canadian citizen. If they want to separate, and that is their decision, if that is what they want, I really do not think that we can stop them. We can make proposals to them and say, okay, this is what we would like, and we could come to agreement. I think we should try to the utmost of our ability to stop them from separating but, as the case may be, they may separate, and I do not want to see that.

If, or when, Quebec does separate—I am not saying they will, but if the problem does arise and it is possible—we also have to deal with whether or not Canada wants to retain its French as a second language considering that if Quebec separates, in theory, we will lose, what? 90 percent of the French-speaking population of Canada, I believe. Do not quote me for that statistic or anything, but in Part I, I believe, Section 16, English and French are the official languages of Canada and equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada.

If Quebec does separate we as Canadians will have to move on from there, and we will have to decide whether or not we do think that in fact we should retain our dual linguistic attitudes. It is something that I think—well, if we do not have that 90 percent, I do not think we should in fact have the French language as our second language. I am not saying I would like to see Quebec separate by any stretch of the word—no, not at all. I want to keep them, but if they do separate, those are some issues we are going to have to deal with.

Talking about the Senate reform, I am not big on opinions when it comes to the Senate. I did not really like all the ruckus that was going on when they were tying to stop the GST, and everything like that, but it is a problem that has to be dealt with. Myself, as a young Canadian, it is something I am sure I am going to have to deal with eventually now that I am turning 18 and starting to get more involved with politics.

I believe in theory of the Triple-E Senate. It is something that could work. I believe in equal representation. It is good for the West. It can really give us a lot of extra power, which we need when dealing with issues that go through the Government, but, like Mr. Mayer mentioned before, it does not work because of itself, but in spite of itself in the United States of America.

I think a Triple-E Senate is better than the Senate we have right now, but the Senate we have right now is not really that impressive, and I would rather have no Senate than the one right now. A Triple-E Senate is something that I think should be pursued and looked towards, say, in the future. It is something the Government and the people of Canada are going to have to look towards.

Moving on from there, basically, that is all that I have to say today, and I would like to thank you for having me present.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, sir. Any questions? Mr. Ashton.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you for your presentation. It is certainly well researched. I am particularly interested in your perspective as a young Thompsonite, a young Manitoban and young Canadian, about what is happening, because I think everybody has agreed on one thing, regardless of their views, of where we should be going, is that we are in for some pretty tough times over the next few years if we have not already been in tough times—even the talk of a new referendum in Quebec and the possibility of separation. The province is talking about whether they would continue to be part of Canada, would join the United States, et cetera.

I am interested in what young people are saying. What do you think the view is of young people here in Thompson, whether it be at R. D. Parker, or generally, in terms of what they see is happening, because it is their future? Do you think they are concerned about what is happening? What is their general outlook in terms of where we are headed in the next couple of years?

Mr. Bruinooge: Well, I believe that there is, I am sad to say, a lot of ignorance on the part of younger people in Canada. I think if we address the issue a lot more in schools, we will see a lot greater opinions on what is going on in the constitutional province of Canada.

People my age hear the words "Meech Lake" and they think of a few certain things like Brian Mulroney, Elijah Harper, and people like that, but when it comes right down to it, I do not know. There is still a lot of information that these young people have to get, but when it comes right down to it, I still believe that the people of Canada, in particular the young people, want to remain as Canadians with a complete and united country including Quebec, including all other provinces, and those certain people who have the opinion to remove Quebec, other people have the opinion to become part of the States even. Those are rather remote opinions.

Generally students, though not completely educated on the issues, do in fact want Canada to completely stay whole even if that means maybe giving up certain things to Quebec and remaining with it as a part of Canada.

Mr. Ashton: I am wondering, in terms of the process—because this is something we discussed this afternoon. The suggestion was made that the problem—and I am not criticizing this process; this is part of the Manitoba tradition. It is one of the few places where you have public hearings on all Bills and constitutional amendments. This is the second time this task force, or at least a version of this task force, has been out to talk to people.

One point that came up this afternoon was the fact that it is difficult for a lot of people to attend these sorts of meetings. If they do, they feel intimidated. It was suggested we look for other ways.

I am wondering, for example, in the case of young people, if maybe we should not be taking this discussion, as you have suggested, into the schools, right into R. D. Parker locally, whether it be the universities or generally. I know from your involvement, et cetera, I am just wondering if knowing the student body as you do whether there would be the interest in doing that sort of thing either through this committee or generally.

Mr. Bruinooge: Yes, I really believe that it would probably be of more importance to go towards the secondary schools, in the form of high schools, rather than universities. Yes, I think it would be quite important to go to the educational system like, say, R. D. Parker in Thompson, bring a non-partisan staff in to basically go over what is going on in a more contemporary fashion, less formal than this setup here.

You are right, students are intimidated to come here and talk in front of such high officials as yourselves and bring up their points and talk about all the things that are going on in Canada, which is a very hard thing to do. If you could bring it in a more contemporary sense to the student body, it could become interesting, and you are going to get a lot more patriotism, a lot more nationalistic views on Canada and how it should be run.

Mr. Ashton: It may be something we can pursue further through yourself through the high school, because I remember when I was a student at R. D. Parker, I remember my politics from the kind of discussions we had at the time. For a lot of years people have said that young people were apathetic, and I do not find that when you talk to people. The problem is a lot of times they do not have a way of expressing their views in a way in which they feel comfortable and also in a way in which they are being heard, so it may be something we can pursue.

Mr. Hickes: Yes, I would just like to ask a few questions because I found your remarks so refreshing. You seem so wise beyond your age. I find it encouraging for Canada. Some of the remarks that you made, coming from an individual of your age, were very articulate and, in my view, very accurate in a lot of issues.

I would just like to ask you, in your discussions and stuff with other youth—I have briefly discussed this with other people, and I am just wondering with your school council or your interaction with other youth, is there anything out there that people are indicating about being forced to learn French? If you have, say, various northern communities where a lot of the languages in northern Manitoba are Cree, they have very little exposure to it through the school systems and through their background. Yet they are forced to take French. Have you any views on that from your circle of friends?

° (2110)

Mr. Bruinooge: Well, I believe in the system we have. I believe that Canada is a bilingual nation to an extent. At the same time, I also believe that at certain times when French is superimposed on certain students of Native background or even of English backgrounds—say in Alberta where there is basically no French communities around to an extent—I think that sometimes it goes a bit overboard. If, in fact, we have the problem of Quebec separating from Canada, I think these are some issues which are

really going to have to be looked at. Canadians are probably going to have to decide whether or not they want to remain bilingual, in particular your statements of students having issues on that.

There are always the students of the English population which do not like to take French. It is a difficult language. I take it myself; I am in 300 English. I do not mind the language, and I am taking it because I know it is quite helpful in a bilingual nation, but there are a lot of students in other areas of the education system that do not like it. That is, I would say, quite a bit of the majority in Thompson would not particularly like to take French, considering I am a part of the only Grade 12 class of 20 people. That is all who made it all the way through the system. That is not too many students compared to what started so, yes, I think there is a lot of anti-sentiment out there toward being imposed with the French language.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Any other questions? Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Bruinooge: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Moryon Swendson?

Mr. Moryon Svendson (Private Citizen): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the task force.

I am speaking as a Canadian, a Manitoban and a Thompsonite from a common man's viewpoint on your questions. I appreciate you have made room for everyone to speak. I notice that you are presented with a copy of my writing here, rather crummy handwriting. Whether you can find your way through it or not, if there are mistakes or whatnot, I apologize.

Mr. Chairman: No, it is very readable, sir. No problem at all.

Mr. Svendson: People at this point I think are not too interested in constitutional talks. The major worry Canadians have today is their job, more or less the lack of it or the fear of losing their job. Until the economics are right, the people, individually or collectively, are not willing to share too much of anything at all because they simply have not too much to share. Be it blue collar workers or an executive, they are all worried.

The federal Government suffers from credibility, for the most part lack of it. The jobs and jobs and jobs that were supposed to come through the Free Trade Agreement have not materialized yet. We have, rather, lost many of our jobs, thousands of them, hundred thousands.

Higher Canadian dollars and high interest rates have not helped either. The Finance Minister even went so far as to take credit for almost creating the recession. Did we forget the CF-18 contracting to Montreal instead of going to Winnipeg?

The way Mr. Mulroney played checkerboard with the First Ministers on the Meech Lake Accord just shows the tactics he would use to play with an important issue like the Canadian Constitution. Perhaps he played these tactics to appease all the separatists from Quebec he had brought into the Conservative Government. Mr. Mulroney must bear the responsibility of the future of Meech Lake. At the present time, his credibility is too low for him to start the talk on the Constitution all over again.

People in Quebec are playing politics. The Allaire commission, with its demand on the federal Government, is only trying to outdo the P.Q. for the Liberals. If those demands are met, there will be no Canada left. Without a strong central Government, the country as we know it today will cease to exist.

As I stated before, economics, Mr. Chairman—before any constitutional talks, the federal and the Manitoba Governments should be concentrating on getting people back to work rather than pitching Quebec against the rest of Canada and vice versa. The Triple-E Senate—elected, equal, effective—does not make any sense to me at all. How can 100,000 people in New Brunswick or P.E.I. be given the same representation as 7 million people in another province? Why should we have two elected Houses? After all, no province has an upper House or a Senate. Senate, as is, is nothing more than a patronage House for the Liberals and Conservative Parties of this country. It is an extra load on the already overburdened taxpayers. Abolished it may be, recreated it should not be.

Now, on a more personal note I will conclude and say that 32 years ago almost, April 28, 1959, I landed in Canada, in Montreal, as an immigrant, with $200 in my pocket. I sought and hoped there was a future in this country. You heard lots about it where I came from. I think I found one, but whether it is there any more, I am not so sure.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, sir. Any questions? Mr. Ashton?

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Svendson. You mention, with your own perspective, and coming from Europe—Denmark, I believe it is—

Mr. Svendsen: Correct.

Mr. Ashton: —32 years ago, and perceptions you had at the time of Canada. It is interesting to reflect on what has happened since, in Europe as well.

I am just wondering what your sense is over the next couple of years as to where Canada heads, what you feel we can do, and what is obviously going to be a very tough time period. From your perspective as someone who has known Europe and its history, and Canada, for the last 32 years, what suggestions do you have in terms of—and I hate to use this term but—putting Canada back together, because there is this real sense of Canada being pulled apart at the seams.

Mr. Svendsen: I think, constitutional wise, I am glad that Meech Lake did not go any further than it did. It was said, and wanted to have some agreement, and then negotiations should take place after. Now, that is the wrong way to go about it as far as I am concerned. You negotiate first and then you have an agreement. That again is my belief anyway.

The economics are in very sad shape in this country. I think Canada has the second largest foreign debt or national debt in the world; I think it is number two.

° (2120)

The tax system has to be revised as far as I am concerned and it should start out with a certain percentage, maybe 20 percent, 25 percent for each taxpayer in this country. That takes in corporations, small or large wage earners, and everybody would be paying their fair share. It even has been said that we will end up paying less. In my opinion, there are too many of the big money makers exempted from the tax system. The banks make millions and millions of dollars. It was said in the papers, I think it was last fall, that Governments, be it federal- or provincial-wise, had deferred over the last 10 years, as much as $36 billion in taxes. You can go to the moon and ask for them, you will not even find them there, you will never get them. It is out of the question.

Mr. Ashton: Just one further question. You mention, in terms of your own perspective, concern about the economic issues. I am just wondering what you are picking up, and as a former president of Local 6166 and now as an elected member of the school board you talk to a lot of people I am sure. What is there in the way of talk about the Constitution? Is there much talk at the current time? What is your sense of what people are talking about?

Mr. Svendsen: When Meech Lake went down, the common perception on that was that it was messily negotiated and a shambles really. People were happy when both our own Elijah Harper and Clyde Wells did what they did, and I think that settled that issue for the time being.

We should have a Constitution. People are not in any doubt about that perception, but it shall not be handed on a platter right to—and give Quebec what they want, because they do want too much. We can go back a year and—well, not that long ago, but when Meech Lake was on the table, Trudeau himself said they cannot have what they ask for because you are giving the country away to them. There have to be reasons within everything they have done. I do not think that we are asking that much from the federal Government, and we cannot live and act on our own. We have rather responsible provincial Governments in this country, maybe except for the ones out there who demand too much.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions? Thank you very much, Mr. Svendsen. Our next presenter is Mrs. Lilly Becker.

Mrs. Lilly Becker (Private Citizen): Hello, my name is Lilly Becker. I am here with Hari Dimitrakopoulou—My God, what a long name—Ashton on behalf of immigrant women of Manitoba, Thompson Chapter. This is not our first time. We had the opportunity to make a presentation to the Meech Lake hearing here in Thompson. At that time, we expressed our concern about the Meech Lake Accord. We felt that the Meech Lake Accord did not address the concerns of many Canadians. Instead of unifying Canada, it made the differences in this country greater.

We are in a unique position as immigrant women to comment on the future of Canada. We have concerns both as new Canadians and as women. Both of these concerns were not adequately addressed by Meech Lake. It did not adequately recognize the multicultural fabric of Canada, nor did it address the concerns of women.

At the same time, we are in the unique position to be able to look at Canada and its Constitution from our own individual perspectives. I am from Germany, as you are no doubt aware. Germany is going through its own identity crisis with the reunion of East and West Germany.

Hari who is with me here is from Greece. This is the country that invented Constitutions. We are both

European, and have watched as Europe moves toward greater integration, certainly in western Europe with countries putting aside ethnic and language differences and working towards a new Europe.

We find it ironic that Canada seems to be going in the other direction. To our mind, it would be a tragedy if Canada were to break up at a time when European nations are coming together.

The real question is, where do we go from here? The first point we would like to make is that we do not feel that Constitutions are about laws or institutions. Certainly Constitutions have legal importance, but the bottom line for this country is not whether it is going to have a new elected Senate or no Senate at all, or whether there are going to be other institutions developed or other bureaucracies.

If Canada is going to continue as a nation, it has to have a framework that reflects the nature of the people of this country.

We feel there is often too much fear about each other. As immigrant women, we are proud to be Canadians and proud of our own backgrounds. We do not want to be German first or Greek first. We can be Canadians and still have our language and culture. That is why when people sometimes feel that multicultural programs are the problem, they forget one thing. That is that many new Canadians are amongst the proudest Canadians you will find. People like ourselves choose this country and we are proud of it. Maintaining our culture does not in any way, shape or change that.

In fact, the greatest tension seems to be between those who have been here the longest, tension between aboriginal people and other Canadians, as Native people always seem to get ignored.

The tension between the English and the French, the first two European nations to settle Canada, we came here well after that and came here because we saw Canada as a nation of tolerance, a nation where we could be ourselves and have our own identities and at the same time be 100 percent Canadian. That may not sound like much, but in many countries, yes. Even in many European countries if you were not born in that country and do not have generations of people from that country as part of your family history, if you have a different accent or look different, you can never be considered really part of that country.

One of the great things about Canada is that despite the fact there is some prejudice, most people will accept you as Canadians if you make a commitment to this country, no matter where you come from or what your accent is.

This is what we need more of in Canada, to discuss what it is like to be Canadian to break down some of the fears. We do not have to be threatened by multiculturalism. We do not have to be threatened by fairness for women. We do not have to be threatened by recognizing the concerns of Native people.

* (2130)

From our perspective as new Canadians, we feel there is a lot in Canada which is worth fighting to keep. Let us not let our country fall apart because of indifference or because we fear each other.

Thanks again for being able to make this presentation to you. It is not easy making a presentation before such a formal body, but we hope even if we are not legal experts that our views about the future of our country will be considered.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mrs. Becker. Are there any questions?

Mrs. Hari Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton (Private Citizen): I would like to make some comments myself about this, and I would like just to make some personal comments.

We all came here—and I mean we immigrant women—and we saw a compassionate, caring and fair society within Canada, and we all really try to make it fair.

We are attracted to Canada. We did not quite like what we saw in our countries as compared to Canada. Canada is such a much better place to live. We contribute here as new Canadians. We contribute hard labour and entrepreneurial spirit.

Brain drained, we are blamed in our countries. We got degrees and we left our countries to Canada's benefit.

At this point, the last few years, we saw some negative signs just diverting away from the positive image we have within us about Canada. We came here to register these concerns and to say one more time that we like Canada to remain just and fair in the sense of universality for health care, fairness to women.

Sometimes we compare Canada and the Triple-E Senate or whatever to the American system. Let us not forget women in the States have not gone as far as Canadian women. We are much more ahead than American women. I am so proud to say that.

If there was any opposition to Meech Lake, it was because we saw these kinds of cracks in the system. If there is any opposition to free trade agreements, we cannot have a legal, just country without having an economic, fair and just country. These two things go together hand in hand.

When we see these negative signs we get alarmed, because we sacrificed families. We sacrificed generations we left behind, and we do not want to say that it was wrong. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Mrs. Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton. Are there any questions? Mr. Hickes.

Mr. Hickes: I would just like to ask, I have heard a few comments today about our universal programs—protect them, protect them. I have heard that more than once today. I hear it again.

I would like to repeat again, when you talk about universal programs, you are talking about all universal programs. When you mentioned medicare, would you include education and—

Mrs. Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton: Absolutely, and I will go as far as child care, which was one of the last few things the federal Government tackled and promised about, and it never came through. It came some kind of . . . really. That was not what the universality of child care was intended to be.

Not only do we have to preserve and maintain, because this is the very fabric of Canada, it is a way of life for Canadians, but go further to become fairer, because unless it becomes fairer, then you exclude 51 percent of the Canadian population that happen to be women, and we have just as much right in the work force as men. Fortunately, I understood there were enough women here today to serve some concerns.

Mr. Hickes: Would I be allowed another question?

Mr. Chairman: Certainly.

Mr. Hickes: I would just like to ask about when you speak about entrenchment in the Constitution and stuff like that. When you were talking about the women's rights, multicultural, and the aspects like that, is that what you meant by entrenching into the Constitution?

Mrs. Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton: Well, we have fought long and hard for the Constitution, and we have remarkable achievements to show. Now whatever this new discussion produces, all we want is to maintain what we have, because that is remarkable as it is and maybe go further, make some extra gains in terms of not just for women, not just for multicultural women—to us it is just remarkable—as people for Canada, as aboriginal women.

The programs such as universal child care, it does not benefit us. It benefits everybody. It just happens to be thought as women's issues and women have to fight it.

Mr. Hickes: I just have one more question and that would be, you mentioned with Americanizing our Senate, if it goes to a Triple-E Senate you are referring to it as Americanizing our Senate, what kind of a system would you like to see as part of the Senate or what would you see done with the whole process of a Senate?

Mrs. Dimitrakipoulou-Ashton: I personally believe the Senate complicates the Canadian political scene and as any other part of legal expertise and what not, the more complicated the law becomes, the more complicated the operation of the country becomes, the worse it is for the average person. He cannot tackle it. He needs experts. We do not need more complicated things, we want to simplify. Personally, I do not like to see the Senate, regardless of the last vote they took, but nevertheless I feel it is going to be one more headache, one more system, one more set of hearings if you like and say and repeat the same thing.

Mr. Chairman: So you are for the abolition of the Senate then?

Mrs. Dimitrakipoulou-Ashton: Absolutely.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions?

Mr. Ashton: I know the views of one of the presenters is certainly well known to me in terms of constitutional issues. I was certainly lobbied enough on Meech Lake.

Mr. Chairman: In fact, sir, you might want to declare a conflict of interest.

Mr. Ashton: Conflict of interest indeed, Hari Dimitrakipoulou-Ashton is my wife. I raise this question because I know both—I remember the presentation before, and I know both presenters have discussed constitutional issues.

I am particularly interested, and it is a similar question that I asked before in terms of what is happening in other areas of the world, particularly in Europe, and immigrant women, whether they are from Europe or Asia or from whatever part of the globe, bring that unique experience. I am just wondering how Europe compares to Canada in terms

of what is happening right now. There was some reference in the presentation to—I know what is happening in Germany obviously, but what is happening generally in Europe?

Mrs. Becker: I think what we need here is strong federal Government and before you make any Constitutions, you should have a referendum. Ask the people. I do not know how they did it back home. I have been here for 35 years you know. I am glad they did it, and I think this breaking up is no good. We should stick together, all of us, and all of us should be treated equal, not here this is a distinct society, next month are the English, they say they are distinct too. Then there are the Ukrainians, they say the same thing. I think we are all Canadians.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much to both, Mrs. Becker, Mrs. Dimitrakopoulou-Ashton.

Brian Wilson. Good evening, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Private Citizen): Good evening, Members of the task force. I think you have my rough notes there, and I apologize for their roughness.

Mr. Chairman: We are ready to proceed, sir. Thank you.

Mr. Wilson: The Constitution has really taken much energy from all sectors of public life: politicians, advisers, policy makers, et cetera. It really has to be questioned as to whether it is and, indeed, should be the predominant issue of our times when many more fundamental issues are closer to the people of this country and this province.

The economy, the need to get used to free trade, the need to restructure the country in the face of shifting world politics and economics are priorities. The Constitution was brought home by Mr. Trudeau some years ago. Why is there still a pressing need to make it the main issue in this country? Some countries have existed without a Constitution for thousands of years. It was all right for over a century for Canada to have a Constitution made elsewhere, but now it seems that we want to bring it back, amend it and etch it in stone in a matter of a few years from its repatriation.

My suggestion is to proclaim a five-year thinking period without any moves to further discuss it at the national level. In that time the shifting political scene may, and perhaps will, have had time to settle.

* (2140)

It is realized that the recent report from Quebec states that a decision on the province's demands is required by 1992 or separation may result. Somehow, however, the debate has to be changed to the fact that Confederation or some form of unity is essential to Canada. Do we pay enough attention to what binds us together or rather what separates us?

The division of powers between the federal and provincial Governments is one of continual friction. I believe that a debate on that issue would probably be able to clear more matters in a short time than a long constitutional debate, although I realize that the Constitution and federal-provincial powers are melded together.

Take the matter of education, which is a provincial jurisdiction. A country that strives to be unified needs to have a unifying vehicle. What better vehicle than education? There is not a federal Minister of Education, but there is a federal Minister of Sport. There is a council of Ministers of Education, but it has little national authority.

Could a national core curriculum bring about a national will to achieve unity? Youth is our hope for the future, we are told and believe. Even with a federal Minister of Education, there is still room for local autonomy. One only has to consider the health care field.

In the matter of Senate reform, one wonders if it is really necessary in the form of yet another elected body. A Triple-E Senate cannot guarantee effectiveness or equality. Those are very subjective terms.

Why does a Senate have to be political? Even an elected one is likely to be political. If the Senate is to give the opportunity for sober second thought and Government Bills, then let it be independent of Government.

A Senate could be appointed not by a Prime Minister, but by the Supreme Court, who are unbiased, or by some other group appointed by the Governor-General to do so. Their mandate would be to appoint a Senate of persons from all walks of life, varying occupations, of various ages, paid well and appointed for the life of a Government. They would not be politicians, but they could give sober second thought to prospective Bills returning to the House of Commons for amendment. It would be the people passing the Bills eventually.

I would just like to say in conclusion that I welcome the opportunity to give my views to the task force, for it is clearly a facet of democracy in action. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, sir. Are there any questions?

Mr. Ashton: I would like to thank the presenter. Brian, thanks for the presentation. I found it interesting, your comments, in terms of other countries having existed without a Constitution, because there was discussion at the head table just a few minutes ago on the very same subject. It is something that I think has increasingly been asked since 1982, and that is if the process was not perhaps rushed and has not put us right now, currently—and I am not saying it might not end up in a better situation. It has not put us in some more difficult situation certainly with what is happening, in terms of Quebec not having signed the Constitution, et cetera.

I am just curious in terms of your suggestion here, which is really a cooling-off period if you like in terms of discussions. What kind of time frame do you think we should be looking at in terms of constitutional discussion? I know you mentioned a five-year period, but do you feel there is any urgent need in a legal sense to get the Constitution or are you more concerned I guess about the political dynamics, as you point out the Quebec deadline, for example, of 1992?

Mr. Wilson: I think there is a strong need for a cooling-off period. In any negotiations—and the last ones on Meech Lake certainly were negotiations that you would not see a good arbitrator probably carrying out—there is a need for a cooling-off period afterwards to let the dust settle.

I think already we are seeing coming from Quebec, in their latest proposal, the need for political solutions to something which really is not a political process, that is the amending, if necessary, a changing of the Constitution. I feel that cooling-off period of five years would give time not only for new thoughts politically but certainly new thoughts of process.

I listened to earlier speakers this evening talk about groups that had been excluded from that original process, and I think we need to get together again and discuss it again.

I believe when Magna Carta was formed, the king just called his barons into the field and said, let us get down to business, and they signed it pretty quickly. Maybe it is the common touch that is needed. Maybe you do not need to be locked up in Ottawa. Maybe you need to go out to Meech Lake and sit in the cabins there or whatever they have, swim in the pool if it is there or the lake, and settle it there in a common surrounding rather than in the very formal surroundings of Ottawa.

Mr. Ashton: Just a further question in terms of your views on the Senate, a very interesting variation of what has been talked about. I know that you are concerned about an elected Senate. I am just wondering, in terms of, how you would see your proposal work, in terms of, would it keep the same number of senators that we currently have? Are you essentially suggesting keeping the institution but modifying it somewhat or are you looking at some other structural changes? I am wondering in what sequence you would do it. Would you eliminate the current Senate and then look at a reformed Senate or work with the existing institution?

Mr. Wilson: I think there should be a reformed Senate with proportional representation. I think then the essential part of that Senate would be people from all walks of life. If we look at eastern Europe, it was not brought about by politicians. It was brought about by a shipyard worker, Mr. Walesa. It was brought about by a playwright, Mr. Havel, I believe. These are the kind of people who have moved things, particularly in eastern Europe, and I think if the common people like that can move eastern Europe in the face of what was an overbearing political system, then I think equally so people in Canada, who are no different, could move things along in a Senate which was comprised not of politicians. I think politicians have a lot of common sense, but they also have a direction that they want to go which is sometimes bound by the Party, but people who have no affiliation would be able to give a much better second, sober thought to things. The difficulty might be as to whether one can accept the decision of such a Senate, when it overrules, for example, Bills or laws brought in by an elected House of Commons.

Mr. Ashton: Of course we just recently saw a case where the Senate attempted to do that on the goods and services tax, and did not succeed in doing, and also the Government's abortion legislation where it effectively did that. So essentially that is happening. So you are suggesting really, a modified version of the current Senate?

Mr. Wilson: Yes, I am suggesting that it would be a modified version of the present, but non-elected. Your comments on the recent display that we saw in the Senate contrasts, really opposite to what I am used to, where Lords and Ladies perhaps go to sleep while the debate goes on, and at least you have got some

calm and quiet, whereas this was entirely opposite of that particular process.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions? Just if I may, a quick comment to you, sir, I do not think there is anybody at this table who would not share the thought of a period of rest from this process. There is a certain weariness, I think, in the land, but one province is not weary and that is Quebec. Of course we are really being driven by the concerns of Quebec and the insistance that these questions be answered by some time late in 1992, or else a referendum will be held where the question will not be, do we as Quebecers accept the changes to the federal system, but rather will we as Quebecers now become independent. So it is that that drives.

I like your proposal for a cooling off. I regret that probably because of the realities of where we are and where we are going, that will not be possible, but it is a refreshing thought certainly. Thank you very much.

* (2150)

Mr. Wilson: I thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Bruce Guyan. Good evening, Mr. Guyan.

Mr. Bruce Guyan (Private Citizen): Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I am sorry I do not have a written presentation.

Mr. Chairman: No problem at all.

Mr. Guyan: I came here with the intentions of just listening, but as Steve Ashton will probably verify, I only listen so long, and then I start stirring up the pot so that is what I intend to do right now.

Mr. Chairman: Could you just pull that mike a bit further toward you, sir. We want to hear that pot well and truly boiling.

Mr. Guyan: You will hear it, ask Steve. I am part of the brawn section of Canada. To me there is only two parts, the brain and the brawn. The brawn are the ones that get the country, and the brains are the ones that solve all the problems, theoretically. So at this point I am just going to point out (1) I am a Canadian and I have been around for a few years. The only problem is, now that I am lookir.g around, and excuse my language, I do not try to be sexist or discriminative, but being a labourer, I talk my mind sometimes. What the hell is a Canadian? I cannot tell you. It is like an average or a normal person. Is it somebody eight foot tall, green hair, purple eyes, or 72 pounds? There is no such thing as an average or normal.

In Canada here they say we are Canadians. Okay, if we are Canadians why is it that if you go everywhere in Canada except Quebec, everything has to be in French and English. Your cereal box is French and English. Everywhere you go, French and English. The French are saying, hey we are losing our rights, you have got the ram the French down. You have got to learn it in school, but yet you go to Quebec, don't you dare talk English, don't you dare show English. This is Quebec, this is not Canada.

I wore the uniform during the Korean War, and I was proud of it. At that time we had the United Nations coming to Halifax because we had the best anti-submarine navy in the world. Today if the the Boy Scouts united we would not have a navy that could stop them, because the Government has dropped us right down to nothing.

We have the Natives. They are complaining, well, they want this, they want that. Some of them get together and they say, okay, now give us $50,000.00. We are going to form our own little group. They get this from the Government, that from the Government. I am a Canadian. I guess I do not get nothin'.

I was unfortunate; I had a stroke. They turned around and they said, okay, fine, as a stroke, you are handicapped. As a handicapped, you have privileges. Now you can get some medical stuff done to your house. Good, so I applied for it. What happened? Now last year I was not worried, I was working, but last year I made too much money. Granted, right now I am flat on my back. I owe three months of payments and everything but, hey, you are still privileged to get this stuff.

So when I applied through the Government bureaucracy of 10 million pounds of paper, phone calls back and forth at my expense, finding out this Government office closed, that Government office closed, I talked to the same office four times, talked to four different people, and nobody knew what the heck I was talking about and did not know where to direct me. This was in a Government building in Winnipeg.

So they turn around and they say, yes, you can have it, but after running around they say, no, you made too much money last year, but we will send you an application. What really burns my fanny is nowhere on there did they ask me where I was born or anything else, but on the bottom of it it says, have you got a treaty number? You say I am a Canadian? I am still asking you, what is a Canadian?

I have kids who have gone to school. I have raised five of them here, in Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Ontario. I have yet to be able to take a kid from one school to another school and carry on where they were, because no two schools, not even in your own province, have the same education standing all the way through the school curriculum. You take a kid from this school, take him over to Juniper—oh, well, he is behind on mathematics or, he is behind on spelling, because this school has their own point of view. Take him to Winnipeg, take him down to Ontario, the kid has about three months left in school—oh, I am sorry. He is behind our standards. He is going to have to go back a year, which gives a kid a good outlook on life.

He is in Canada. I am a Canadian. Whoopee-ding. It does not do me any good though, does it? It only does me good if I live at my place and stay there.

Manitoba comes out with a W210 Workplace Safety and Health Act. The politicians said, this is law. We take it as law, the working class. What happens now? The company turns around and tells the Government, I am not going to pay attention to this Act, an Act that has been passed by legislation, three sittings in the House. Who has to take him to court? The working man. Who has to pay to take him to court? The working man. Granted, if we win the case, we get our money back, but we did not set the laws. The politicians set the laws, and yet we are the ones who have to pay to enforce it. I took a Government course, and I was told right by the Minister of Health in this province, we make the laws, we do not enforce them. If they cannot enforce them, why make them?

Why should we, the working class, have to suffer for somebody who is sitting back and figuring out some way, how can we goof up the working class? They did it with the metric system. Some guy wanted to make his job a good important position. What can I do to goof up the working class? Hey, let us come up with metric. England has had this for years, but everybody speaks English in their world but, hey, all of a sudden imperial does not mean a thing. I was raised on fractions and feet and everything else.

During the Second World War, I never heard anybody walking around the streets complaining that their child—the war is psychologically driving them crazy, we have to have these children going to psychologists. During the Second World War, I never heard anybody—groups joining together and saying, hey, this war is costing us X million dollars a day, do you realize every time one of our planes go up, it is going to cost us this much money? Nobody was complaining about that then.

I remember as a kid standing in a lineup, I could have had all the money in the world, but if I did not have a coupon I could not have got a certain little bit of sugar, a certain little bit of butter, but today, this is all forgotten about. It seems like there is no Canada. We are just people that are fighting and arguing among ourselves, and until we decide to become a country—one country, one language, one law, united—there will never be a Canada. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Guyan. Any questions?

Mr. Ashton: I can testify that Bruce has—for me, he is one of my most regular people in terms of feedback. A couple of the points that I know you raised in terms of what happened, for example, in that housing situation. I mean, it is classic of the kind of bureaucratic situation a lot of people run into—not having the money now, but being told you made too much last year, when you need the assistance—is classic of what is happening.

You know, the kind of frustration you expressed is—a lot of the people, they have the same frustrations, day in and day out, but they do not express it that way. I think that maybe what you are suggesting to this committee is maybe we need to let it out a bit and talk about it and start discussing what is happening in the country, each from our own perspective.

I wanted to thank you in that sense for the presentation. I know you had a concern earlier about whether you would get the chance to even speak, and I am wondering if you want to maybe outline that to the committee, because I know you had expressed concern that many people will not do what you have done, which is put verbally, publicly their views ahead.

Mr. Guyan: On that aspect there, Steve, the thing I find with the Government, and I am not trying to just single out you people here. I am not really basing it just directly at you people, but it is the same as a northern allowance or anything else you have. Now I happen to be—rather than sit on my duff, I have an education and I have a trade; I am a tradesman at Inco.

* (2200)

Fortunately enough, the trade that I do, I work straight days from 7:30 to four. So all of a sudden, we get these commissions come up here. Now to start with, where the heck does the commission get the

money to do all this travelling throughout the country? From the guy that is working from eight to five. But they come up at such a time as the working guy that is supporting them and paying all of this, he does not get a chance to even talk, because he is at work while they are here, because they have to get a plane later to go someplace else. Or else it is too cold up here for them to come for a whole weekend so the guys can talk to them, because we work shift work up here. This is a one industry town, a mine.

So rather than come up here and say, okay, now look, this is very important to you; it is your life; it is your country, but now wait a minute, you are going to have to take a day off work, lose $100 just to come down and give us your opinions—forget it. We are paying you to start with. How about coming up on our time; spend some time with us; give us a chance to get out and talk to you.

Like we said, if you look around the world there are two things that I see that could be used in Canada which might help some. One, the Americans they elect their President as an individual; I did not elect our Premier. Of course—well, I better not talk about that—but the thing is, when we vote, what do we vote? We do not vote for the Prime Minister. We vote for a Party or for the person who is running in our district, but it just so happens that this guy has enough money and enough clout that he got himself in there and somehow he got himself in charge of this Party. Now does that make him the people's choice to run the country? We were voting in the Party, not the man, and yet this guy turns around and says the people voted me in. Bull, we voted him in. It just so happened that his Party got voted in, and he was the guy that is leading it. That is all.

I think maybe we should look at voting our Prime Ministers individually from our provinces. As far as frustration, maybe we should go with the Japanese. They have turned around, and they make punching bags. You walk into there, and they have a mask of every one of the bosses in that place. You put the mask on, and you punch it until the frustration is gone. Maybe we should have some of that around here, too.

Mr. Chairman: What a fascinating idea. Are there any other questions? Thank you very much, sir. Are there any other presenters in the room, ladies and gentlemen? If not—any others?

I would like to thank you very much, those of you who came out this evening, presented and listened while others presented or just listened. We have certainly had an interesting day here, and we have I think, profited very much by what has been said to us in Thompson.

I wish you a good evening, and we will be off to The Pas tomorrow and look forward to sharing some thoughts with the people there. Thank you again.

HEARING ADJOURNED AT: 10:03 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSION PRESENTED BUT NOT READ

Thompson Progressive Conservative Association

Submission to the Manitoba Constitutional Task Force Presented by Ken Collin

Mr. Chairman, legislative Members, fellow citizens, it is my pleasure to submit this brief to you on behalf of the Thompson constituency's Progressive Conservative Association. We appreciate the immensity of your task, and sincerely hope that your inquiry can find the answers that are needed to ensure the unity of the citizens of our province within the fabric of a strong and united Canada.

With so much controversy around the world monopolizing the news media, our problems seem at times parochial or small in comparison, however, let us not forget that the underlying fundamental differences like we faced during the Meech Lake debates and ongoing discontent in the Quebec hearings, lie just below the surface and if surfaced can tear this fabric of Canada into dozens of regional, racial, ethnic and linguistic camps. Such differences have real detrimental effects, not only on the emotions and objectivity of our citizens, but on every level of Government, the economy and international confidence in our security.

But just as surely as our differences will resurface, we must not be trapped into believing that solely fighting against each separatist or discontented group will solve the problems. Underlying reasons that drove these Canadians to feel the need to separate from one of the most progressive, free democracies in the world must be researched and concrete solutions found to ensure the survival of Canada from coast to coast to coast. We must learn that in winning, as in the Quebec referendum, or in defeat, as with Meech Lake, we cannot go from battle to battle without seeking some appeasement of the problems

which led up to the battle, nor can we give up as responsible Canadians and fail to recognize defeat as only one step toward real solutions.

Governments and parties in opposition must also accept their responsibilities to work together to solve our differences. In showing responsibility they must also accept that they must cease selling the presumption that they can be all things to all people. Short term solutions or attempts to buy off discontent will only serve to magnify that discontent when it again resurfaces.

In summations, our association believes, as does our party that long-term solutions to our many problems can be found through the democratic legislative bodies we have always relied upon, and given that we, as Canadians must accept the responsibility to ensure our elected representatives are willing to work together toward these solutions and not just the political opportunism such battles can present. No one level of Government should presume that it is less responsible for the current situation. Our current difficulties stem just as much from a refusal to go forward toward national unity, as it does from refusal to learn from the past.

PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The priorities which must be addressed are those barriers which underlie the opposition to real constitutional reform. Without addressing these barriers, opposition in its various forms will always be present as they magnify the geographic, economic, racial and ethnic differences among Canadians.

We do not assume that the following issues are all the barriers that must be addressed, nor do we feel they will be easy to overcome. As Canadians, we must accept they exist and deal with them as a whole.

The "Centralized" Federal Government

Canada is an association of provinces and territories whose people believed that such association would be a means of protection and all the other benefits unification would bring (i.e. lack of east/west trade barriers, remaining in the British Commonwealth, etc.)

Over the many years since, more and more responsibility for affairs that affect individual Canadians have been soaked up or created by the central Government, and as communication was difficult or slow over such a wide land, the administration and policy-making as it relates to these affairs was and still is centralized in the main, to Ottawa and surrounding areas. So too, the responsibility for many such affairs was not challenged to any great extent by the provinces or their citizens. As their bureaucracies grew, so too the greater need for taxation and other revenue sources. However, as the central Government extended and increased their tax bases and revenues, municipal Governments remained stagnant and/or ceased to keep up with inflation. Rather than funding local initiatives through municipal bond issues and special tax levies, provincial Governments assumed more and more of the funding "share costed", to some extent with the central Government.

Public participation in community debt issues in Manitoba at this time is almost nil, with the Department of Municipal Affairs and other departments picking up the shortfall. In short, funds which could be there to fund medical, educational and social needs are drying up, and the ability of taxpayers to fund provincial and central Government income tax increases is also drying up.

Now as provincial Governments must prioritize their needs, local Governments are having their operating allocations from provincial agencies cut. Property taxes and utility rates are increasing proportionally, putting even more pressure on taxpayers.

Provinces with the largest proportion of the nation's population, Ontario and Quebec, while funding large proportions of central Government transfer payments, also require the greatest proportion of central Government "share costed" municipal projects. These large amounts of funding going to these provinces is one of the largest thorns in the sides of western and maritime separatist groups, and the lack of local autonomy over funding of community projects is one of the most useful platforms for Quebec nationalists.

At a time when amounts exceeding $50 billion are tied up in personal RRSP accounts, the onus must be upon the provincial and central Governments to re-evaluate both spending and funding policies. Government guaranteed municipal debt, with tax exemption on interest and capital gains on such bonds must seriously be considered before Canadians can again accept that the central Government is really serious about genuine tax reform.

So too, federal Government departments must be more decentralized, in similar fashion to the Manitoba

Government's recent initiatives. Despite the advancing technology of Fax machines and microwave transmission, the central Government has not kept pace with enabling decentralization. Real power and decision making is still closely guarded in Ottawa, in a world domestically and internationally demanding faster source communications. No matter how open a Government may be, lack of useful and timely communication will disable its ability to be effective.

Ethnic, Racial and Linguistic Discontent

Except for Canada's First Nations, we are all descended from immigrant populations that have and continue to shape the multicultural nature of our nation. The only long-term, effective (or meaningful) fight against discrimination and the discontent it causes in society, has been through education. Much, much more must be done through education and affirmative action programs than has been done to date. Real appreciation and respect for others and the rights afforded to each Canadian under the Constitution are not in any primary curriculum in this or any other province in Canada.

Because of the emotional nature of such discontent, we cannot be trapped into wholesale, forced linguistic reform. Forced reform in the guise of university entrance requirements or sign laws jeopardize other rights under the Constitution, and again fuels widespread discontent. Such initiatives cannot be regulated by federal or provincial Government, but trust must be placed with local communities and school boards to decide for themselves. This has worked for many years in general harmony in Manitoba, up and until recent times. However, and to make our point, we only have to look back to the official languages debates in the Manitoba Legislature to see how the forces of discontent can surface and how quickly it can become a "no win" issue for federal and provincial Governments. Yes, the federal and provincial Governments must ensure that Canadians' rights are protected under the Constitution, but to deprive them of linguistic choice in their own communities and educational institutions is not the answer.

The Senate as Forum for Constitutional Reform

Our association and provincial party endorses the concept of an elected Senate, constituted of equal numbers from each province and territory. Such a body could solve the difficulties inherent with the current amending process and avoid the disunification of the country from defeat of initiatives meant to unify the country.

We believe that constitutional amendment initiatives and the responsibility for the Constitution itself should rest with the House of Commons, however provincial and regional protection of citizens from harmful constitutional change should rest with an outside body, not just the judicial system. Reliance upon the approval of all legislative houses in the nation has proven unworkable and divisive in its own right. By giving responsibility for approval of constitutional change to the elected Senate, we would be ensuring that the democratic input of each province's population is represented, while regional and/or local issues can be aired in an accepted forum.

We contend that it is not acceptable for any one province to have veto over constitutional change affecting the whole of the nation. To allow this concession could unjustly disallow constitutional and/or legislative progress, in the same manner as the current amending formula.

We have an opportunity through Senate reform to make it work for us in many diverse ways. One of the most important is to ensure that the role it plays in constitutional issues is effective and necessary. This can be done without taking away from the current legislative and judicial bodies.

Overcoming These Barriers

Manitobans can look forward to our future in Canada with hope and unity. It is these obstacles that will continue to fan the flames of disunity if they are not addressed. It is up to each Canadian to work toward communicating with their elected representatives at all levels, to ensure these barriers are addressed.

The Canadian Constitution belongs to Canadians. It is Canadians that must overcome obstacles to its reform and enforcement. It is up to Canadians to ensure their elected representatives in whose trust the Constitution is placed are willing to accept the responsibility of change as well as protection.

We thank you for this opportunity to present our concerns and hope that our recommendations will reinforce those of other groups and citizens who come before you. We appreciate your giving northern Manitobans the opportunity of their input.

Ken Collin, on behalf of

The Progressive Conservative

Association of Thompson.